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ABSTRACT

This document provides a working definition of youth development based on existing theories and discussions, and crafts a strong case for strengthening the role of the non-school voluntary sector in promoting youth development. Part I of this three-part report focuses on this working definition of youth development, examining the need for such a definition, the need within the non-school voluntary sector, and a framework for thinking about youth development and youth development supports. Part II works toward a theory of youth development. Competence and competencies are defined, as are basic needs. The relationship between needs and competencies is explored, and implications for a theory of positive youth development agents are discussed. The actors that influence youth are identified. Part III examines the role of the voluntary sector in promoting positive youth development. This section includes a snapshot of the non-school voluntary sector, a sampling of empirical evidence that strengthening youth programming within the non-school voluntary sector makes sense, and a sampling of supportive theories. The document concludes that there is a strong case for strengthening and better defining the role of community programs in youth development. "Communities and Adolescents: An Exploration of Reciprocal Supports" is appended. A 10-page bibliography is included. (NB)

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BRIDGING THE GAP

*A Rationale for Enhancing the Role
of Community Organizations in
Promoting Youth Development*

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Commissioned Paper #1
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Bridging the Gap:

**A Rationale for Enhancing the Role
of Community Organizations in
Promoting Youth Development**

by
**Karen J. Pittman with
Marlene Wright**

for
**The Task Force on Youth Development and Community Programs
at the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development**

Karen Pittman is the Center's director and a vice president of the Academy for Educational Development. Marlene Wright is program associate at the Center for Youth Development.

This is one of two papers commissioned from the Center by Carnegie Council Adolescent Development for the Task Force on Youth Development and Community Programs of which Karen Pittman was a member. The second paper, "Building Supportive Communities for Youth: Local Approaches to Enhancing Community Youth Services and Support", is also available through the Center. This paper was prepared with financial technical assistance from the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. Much of the background research on community youth initiatives that provided the framework for this paper was made possible by the support of the Ford Foundation and the Lilly Endowment.

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The Center for Youth Development and Policy Research

The Center for Youth Development and Policy Research was established in 1990 at the Academy for Educational Development in response to growing concern about youth problems. Like many organizations, CYD is dedicated to contributing to better futures for disadvantaged children and youth in the United States. CYD works vigorously to capitalize on both the growing concern about youth problems and growing willingness to search for new solutions. Our goal: to transform concern about *youth problems* into public and private commitment to *youth development*.

Every institution that touches young people's lives should be held accountable for providing, to the greatest extent possible, opportunities to meet needs and build competencies. Institutions do not have to be comprehensive service providers. They should, however, all work toward their mandates in a way that they can ensure, at an absolute minimum, that they are doing no harm.

CYD sees its roles as strengthening national, state, local, and community leaders' -- both public and private -- capacity to craft public and private policies, programs and practice standards that are supportive of the country's young people. CYD provides these leaders with a sound conceptual framework for understanding what youth need to develop and an array of practical tools and strategies for facilitating assessment and change.

To accomplish these objectives, the Center provides services which include: conducting and synthesizing youth research and policy analyses; disseminating information about exemplary youth programs and policies and establishing collaborative efforts with these groups; designing and implementing program evaluations, community assessments, and special projects; and providing technical assistance to national organizations, state and local governments, and public and private institutions interested in improving their youth development efforts.

The Academy for Educational Development is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing human development needs throughout the world. Since its founding in 1961, AED has conducted projects throughout the United States and in more than 100 countries in the developing world.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We were charged with two tasks in writing this paper: first, to offer a working definition of youth development based on existing theories and discussions; second, to craft the strongest possible case for strengthening the role of the non-school voluntary sector in promoting youth development, given existing evidence. Both tasks were unexpectedly challenging.

Defining Youth Development

We began with the premise that we were looking for a definition of youth development that is different from the descriptions of adolescent development found in the academic literature -- a definition that combines process with goals. Our literature review did not unearth a single, commonly-used definition of youth development. It did, however, uncover strong recurring themes that suggest a reciprocal relationship between youth and society. One theme is competence. There is widespread concern that our young people are inadequately prepared for adulthood, be it because of changes in demographics or changes in labor force requirements. Contained in the literature, particularly the policy and programmatic literatures, are also numerous lists of desired outcomes for youth. Sometimes these lists are stated positively (e.g., youth should be good workers, good citizens); sometimes negatively (e.g., adolescents should not drop out of school, use drugs, or become teenage parents).

Different, and equally important, are the numerous lists of what youth need (i.e., structure, ways to contribute). These lists reflect a second and strongly recurring theme: that current supports and opportunities available to adolescents, particularly those who are poor and minority, have not only failed to impart necessary skills, but also have not met the fundamental needs of adolescents. There was a strong undercurrent in the literature reviewed that, in large part, our youth are failing us because we are failing them. There is growing concern that the current supports and opportunities available to adolescents, particularly low-income and minority adolescents, are not only failing to help them build all of the requisite skills, they are not providing the experiences that are critical to meeting adolescents' fundamental needs. We synthesize these needs and competencies as follows:

Competencies

health/physical competence
personal/social competence
cognitive creative competence
vocational competence
citizenship competence
(ethics and participation)

Basic Needs

a sense of safety and structure
a sense of belonging/membership
a sense of self-worth/contributing
a sense of independence/control over one's life
a sense of closeness/relationships
a sense of competence/mastery

We pull these two themes together into a definition of youth development that builds on and expands definitions found in the current academic, program and policy literature on adolescent development and youth issues. We suggest that, first and foremost, the term *youth development* be attached firmly to young people, not solely to the institutions that serve them. Youth development should be seen as an ongoing, inevitable process in which all youth are engaged and all youth are invested. Even in the absence of family support and formal or informal programs, all young people will seek ways to:

- 1) meet their basic physical and social needs (some of which change considerably during the course of adolescence);
- 2) build the individual assets or competencies (knowledge, skills, relationships, values) they feel are needed to participate successfully and fully in adolescence and adult life, and use them in self-gratifying and self-empowering ways.

Needs and assets are the two axes of youth development (See Figure 1, A Framework for Mapping Youth Development Agents) – empowerment and competence. We agree that young people, in addition to being problem free, (e.g. not pregnant, not delinquent, not dropouts) need to develop along both of these dimensions to be successful in adult roles. We suggest, furthermore, that needs and competencies are interactive (e.g., young people who feel competent are more likely to seek new tasks than those who do not feel competent) and that needs can be met (and competencies used) in socially acceptable or socially unacceptable ways (adolescents, for example, can fulfill their need for group membership and structure by joining a youth-serving organization or a gang).

Identifying Positive Youth Development Agents

Whether and how young people meet their basic needs and apply the competencies they develop depends largely on the strength and direction of influences in their lives. Ample research and theory exist to suggest that family, peers, school, community groups, religious organizations and places of employment are all important determinants of youth development. We suggest that these people, places, programs and institutions be seen as youth development agents and, based on the literature review, make the following assertions:

- Every individual, program, organization with whom an adolescent interacts is not an agent. Agents, by definition, have to have an influence on young people.
- All agents do not have a substantial and positive impact on youth. Complementary influences are reinforcing and have an enhancing effect on youth development; competing influences are confusing and have a dampening effect.
- Agents' influence can vary in both strength and direction:
- Agents that address multiple needs have a larger potential impact on youth development than do those that address a single need; agents that address multiple competencies have a larger potential impact on youth development than those that address a single competency.
- Agents that address both multiple needs and multiple competencies will have the largest potential impact on youth development. These agents should be considered *primary youth development agents*.
- Even though their goals are positive, *agents that create an environment that disempowers youth* by actively inhibiting their ability to contribute, to form close relationships, to master any tasks which are perceived as important, etc. cannot be considered positive youth development agents.
- Even though their impact on needs and competencies may be positive, *agents that encourage young people to develop self-limiting and/or socially undesirable behaviors or to apply their skills in self-limiting and/or socially undesirable ways (e.g. gangs)* cannot be considered positive youth development agents.
- *Primary positive youth development agents*, then, are agents that address the multiple needs of youth and foster the development of competencies and behaviors that are seen as desirable and important by family, community, society.

Defining the Role of the Voluntary Sector in Promoting Positive Youth Development

There is no definitive categorization of non-school and, for the most part, non-public organizations offering community programs for youth. Indeed, this clustering of organizations cuts across several more commonly recognized sectors (e.g. public, religious, civic), and they are by no means a monolithic group. They range from large national organizations, like the Boy Scouts, that serve millions of youth and have annual budgets upwards of \$10 million to small community programs that have no full-time, paid staff. But while there are substantial differences within this group, the majority of these organizations share some common characteristics, especially when compared to schools.

These organizations tend to have broader missions than schools. They are backed by strong traditions and philosophies that define their use of volunteers, their commitment to service, and their approach to service delivery. While there is wide variation, these organizations tend to be smaller and more loosely structured than schools. The loose structure, diverse funding base, and heavy use of volunteers that seem to typify these organizations contribute to their flexibility.

The sharpest distinctions between schools and the non-school voluntary organizations that serve youth are translated in their programs and practices. As a group, these organizations tend to offer a much wider array of programs and supports than do schools, place a higher value on youth participation, and rely heavily on non-formal educational methods. The programs and activities offered span all competency areas and include activities such as sports and recreation programs, life skills courses, community service, homework monitoring, problem prevention services and experiential science and math education (see Table 6). Equally important, the practices and strategies used in delivering these services reflect a clear understanding of the importance of meeting young people's basic physical and social needs. The almost universal use of small groups, flexible grouping practices, symbols of membership (e.g. uniforms, t-shirts), and clear structures (e.g. regular meetings, codes of conduct) recognize the importance of structure, belonging, and group membership to adolescents. Most compelling is the strong emphasis on providing *each* adolescent with manageable challenges that encourage progress, rewards and the development of a personal sense of achievement. This conscious emphasis on *broadening* the

opportunities for success, reward and recognition stands in sharp contrast to the approach usually taken in schools.

Assessing the Evidence

There are some 400 national youth-serving organizations listed in the latest *Directory of American Youth Organizations* and over 17,000 U.S. non-profits that classify themselves as youth development organizations. Seven out of ten eighth graders report that they participate in outside-of-school activities. If presence counts for anything, the ubiquity of these organizations and programs suggests one reason to make them a focus of attention. While far from a cohesive network of actors, these thousands of community organizations and programs do offer a vehicle for reaching youth.

A rationale for strengthening the role of the non-school voluntary sector in youth development must be based on more than head counts, however. There needs to be empirical evidence that demonstrates that participation in these organizations is 1) perceived as valuable by youth and adults and 2) found to have a significant impact on some if not all of the competencies and needs that define youth development. Additionally, there needs to be theoretical evidence that non-school voluntary organizations play instrumental, supplementary and/or unique roles in youth development because of what they offer young people and how, when and where they offer it.

Our search found both types of evidence. Empirical evidence that young people and their parents want low-cost, after-school and summer programs in their schools and neighborhoods that offer not only safe places but interesting activities and challenges. Evidence that young people, particularly young adolescents, may spend too much time alone and that teachers and school administrators identify this as a problem that contributes to in-school difficulties. Evidence that young people recognize the importance of having strong personal and social skills and want assistance in building these skills. Evidence that young members and adult alumni alike value greatly their participation in these organizations and feel that it contributes to their overall development in unique and important ways. Evidence that participation in both general and prevention-focused programming of youth-serving organizations has an impact on behavior -- that

problems (e.g. teenage pregnancy and substance abuse) are reduced and positive behaviors (e.g. adult involvement in community activities, leadership skills) are increased.

Some of the strongest arguments for strengthening the role of community organizations in promoting youth development, however, were found in the theoretical literature on community and the ecology of adolescent and human development. Wynn et. al (1987), state the importance of this sector clearly:

The separate contexts for socializing adolescents -- families, schools, peers, the media, the workplace, and communities -- have distinct functions in enhancing the development of youth. One context cannot take the place of others. Nevertheless, one of the values of community supports is that they can respond and accommodate to the changing structure and function of other socializing contexts for adolescents (p.13).

Beyond the powerful arguments that the community setting is an important stage for adolescent development, there are also strong theoretical rationales for ensuring the availability of non-school, non-required programs and activities for youth. Larson and Kleiber (in process) present a thorough theoretical argument for elevating adolescent free time activities to the level of developmental importance attached to childhood play. They argue:

...[free time] activities provide important opportunities for the development of self-direction, self-expression, and motivated involvement. Free time activities such as socializing, sport, playing a musical instrument, or even in some cases, deviant activities provide a transitional link between the spontaneous play of childhood and the more disciplined activities of adulthood (p.3).

The authors argue that only activities which are found to be enjoyable, seen as challenging and viewed as voluntary provide young people with the opportunity to set personal goals and assess their own progress toward reaching those goals. These "transitional activities" as they call them, are rarely found in families, schools, or the work setting. Community programs are one of the chief places where young people have these opportunities.

We feel a strong case can be made for strengthening and better defining the role of community programs in youth development. The evidence we collected can be used to garner immediate support for community programs that serve youth. A more systematic and in-depth review and second analysis of the theoretical and empirical research literatures would, we are

confident, yield an even stronger evidence base that could be used to argue for the development of permanent strategies for strengthening this important sector.

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INTRODUCTION

...the difficulties we face in this country of fostering competent and responsible youth are self-inflicted. They are the darker side of some of our most cherished beliefs....When American youth learn less in school than their peers in other countries, and when they use more drugs, commit more crimes, and have more babies, then this behavior cannot be attributed simply to their youthfulness; it must have something to do with the conditions surrounding them. The message is hopeful because it implies that improvement is possible, but cautionary because it means that effective change will be deep-rooted and difficult to accomplish.

Stephen Hamilton
Apprenticeship for Adulthood

Growing awareness of the seriousness of youth problems in this country (e.g., substance abuse, delinquency, early pregnancy, early school leaving), and of the magnitude of these problems compared to those experienced by youth in other countries has led policymakers, practitioners, and the general public to agree with the above statement. We, as a society, are not offering something to our young people that we should be. The questions that need to be answered are obvious: What are we doing wrong? How did it happen? How do we change the situation? In the spirit of this concern, we explore in this report the potential role of the voluntary sector in promoting positive youth development.

This paper is one of a series of working papers commissioned by the Task Force on Youth Development and Community Programs, a newly formed working group of the Carnegie Corporation's Council on Adolescent Development. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development was established in June 1986 to place the challenges of the adolescent years -- especially the early adolescent years -- higher on the nation's agenda. In many ways, it is picking up where the Panel on Youth that James Coleman chaired left off in 1975.

In June 1989, the Council released *Turning Points*, the final report of the Council's Task Force on the Education of Young Adolescents. That report, which has been extremely well-received, lays out a broad agenda for correcting the "volatile mismatch [that] exists between the organization and curriculum of middle grade schools and the intellectual and emotional needs of

young adolescents." (p.8). In May of the following year, the Council established the Task Force on Youth Development and Community Programs, which was charged with producing a parallel report on the current and potential future roles of youth-serving and other community-level non-school organizations in promoting the positive development of the nation's youth.

If the numerous reports issued on youth problems and youth issues over the past three or four years have had one common theme, it is that the country's commitment to "preparation for adulthood" must go beyond a commitment to formal schooling and that the examination and revitalization of the institutions charged with helping young people successfully navigate this transition must go beyond schools. As Beatrix Hamburg writes,

Responsible citizenship in our society requires not only a broad fund of knowledge but also a range of social competencies that include such life skills as social problem solving, decision-making and skill in evaluating powerful media messages and persuasions. Our society is reevaluating the educational system...However, there has been very little attention paid to preparing our youth for successful adult life in the areas that fall outside the boundaries of traditional formal school criteria (p.1).

This idea is not new. In 1974, James Coleman opened the report of the Panel on Youth of the President's Science Advisory Committee with an eloquent call for a new environment for youth development:

Every society must somehow solve the problem of transforming children into adults, for its very survival depends on that solution. In every society there is established some kind of institutional setting within which the process of transition is to occur, in directions predicted by societal goals and values. In our view, the institutional framework for maturation in the United States is now in need of serious examination (p.1).

These words are even more applicable today. As a society, we are immersed in concern about youth problems, labor shortages, changing demographics. Yet we are only now beginning to take seriously the need for close examinations of both the "societal goals and values" that implicitly dictate the opportunities and supports we offer our young people and the institutions that have been charged with providing these opportunities and supports. This paper takes a beginning look at the territory beyond formal education and formal schools. It poses, and offers preliminary

answers to, a number of difficult questions: What are the characteristics of the community programs that exist outside of school? How do these programs differ from the formal and informal supports offered by schools? by families? What is youth development? Does it encompass more than education? As a term, or a field, how does it differ from adolescent development? Is there an accepted definition of youth development that is grounded in theory? Is there any evidence that youth development, however defined, is enhanced by participation in community programs? Are there examples of youth programs that are based on youth development theory? Do these programs have any impact on salient youth outcomes?

The research for this paper was driven by a simple logic: one cannot develop a strong case without clear definitions. Thus, the first section of this paper offers a framework for thinking about youth development and youth supports. The second section of this paper offers a working theory of youth development, based on our broad review of both academic and non-academic literatures and our broad knowledge of youth programs. The third section offers a set of descriptive characteristics by which community-based, non-school organizations and agencies, and the programs that they offer, may be distinguished from schools and families (the other primary institutions in young adolescents' lives) and a summary of the evidence that participation in this sector (and/or in the types of programming traditionally offered by this sector) has a positive impact on adolescents' present and future lives.

Toward a Working Definition of Youth Development¹

The Need for a Definition of Youth Development

Youth development is a concept that has received increased attention over the past few years. Several large foundations have established youth development as a major program area. Researchers (e.g. Dryfoos, 1990; Elliott, 1989) are pointing to the need for comprehensive strategies to address youth problems that are grounded in an understanding of their interrelatedness. Some states (New Jersey, Wisconsin, California) have begun to invest in school-based programs that address multiple areas of need. At the federal level, two issues—youth service and mentoring—have received focused attention, and the Department of Labor has recently initiated a major seven-site intervention, Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU), that seeks to strengthen the capacity of communities to address youth development.

Certainly, this focus on what is required if young people are to move from childhood to adulthood successfully is positive. However, it is of limited utility when much of the discussion remains vague and there is little *articulated* agreement about what youth development is, how positive youth development can be encouraged and supported, which people in which institutions are the best youth development agents and what constitutes effective and promising, if not proven strategies.

There is a great deal of academic literature on adolescent development which focuses on categorizing the tasks and stages of adolescence and describing the factors that influence adolescents' progress through these steps. There are many programmatic statements about what types of supports and opportunities young people need to both ameliorate deficits and develop strengths, and how these are best structured and delivered. There is an ever-increasing number

¹ This section is based in part on portions of an earlier paper, "Understanding Youth Development: A Review of the Current Status of the Field and Options for Policy and Program Development," prepared by Karen Pittman and Michele Cahill for the Ford Foundation.

of policy reports on what society does *not* want its young people to do as adolescents, what it does need them to be able to do as adults, and what strategies must be enacted to create change.

There is, however, little discussion and less research which juxtapose current conceptualizations of what adolescents experience, do, and need with what families, communities and society expect, reject and offer. Yet both our review of the literature and general knowledge of the "field" suggest that this merged view of adolescence as both a developmental process and a critical preparation period is exactly what is needed. As we discuss in more detail in another paper (Cahill and Pittman, 1991), the broad adoption of positive youth development as the goal of any policies or programs for youth is necessary to reduce stigmatized and ineffective programming and will assist in the development of cohesive strategies for addressing youth issues. While there are many ways to organize for assessment and change—by institution (e.g., school reform and restructuring), by population (e.g., young black males), by problem (e.g., teenage pregnancy prevention), we believe that a central rallying point is critical to ensure sustained attention to youth. Adopting a youth development focus allows those individuals and organizations involved:

- to situate their current goals and activities within a broad context of youth needs so that they can see the connections between their goals (e.g., youth employment) and others' efforts (e.g., pregnancy prevention or recreation);
- to avoid continued fragmentation focusing on youth problems; to press for a more holistic examination of youth needs;
- to avoid the continued mentality that leads us to define youth solely as a service-needy population that in the short-run incurs costs and provides few payoffs; to demonstrate the critical role that schools play in the overall delivery of services to youth and in the broader development of supports and opportunities for youth;
- to force articulation and acknowledgment of the importance of non-academic competencies; to promote the development of better strategies for supporting the development of these competencies;
- to force the recognition and exploration of the contributions that programs, experiences and opportunities *outside of school and work* have on the development and growth of young people;

- to gather a broad and somewhat different array of actors to reach consensus and plan specific actions (those involved should include community-based organizations, schools, civic, religious and traditional youth-serving organizations, minority advocacy and community development groups, youth employment and training agencies, business, juvenile courts and youth bureaus);
- to address, head-on, the underlying issues of class and race that suggest that not all youth are worth developing; and
- to forestall the creation of a two-tier system of supports for youth that, based on class and race, offers some youth participation and enrichment, and others social services and case management. (Cahill and Pittman, 1991)

The Need Within the Non-School Voluntary Sector

The arguments just made offer a compelling rationale for defining and moving the idea of youth development. This effort is critical to building a case for enhancing the role and status of community-level non-school programs.

The non-school voluntary sector -- the array of traditional youth-serving, community, civic and religious organizations found in communities -- offers programming and supports that *fill gaps*. It engages children and youth when they are *not* in school, it offers them opportunities to learn and develop skills that are *not* solely academic and learn in ways that are *not* formal instruction, it involves them with young people *not* in their age group and with adults who often are *not* paid professionals, it offers them opportunities *not* to be judged by past failures. It gives them places to be that are *not* family and *not* school.

Clearly, there is a general public sense that the programs and supports offered by this sector are *beneficial* to adolescents. Donations to and involvement in these organizations remain high. Groups such as the Scouts, 4-H, the YWCA and YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, reach an estimated 30 million children and youth annually. The National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 found that 71 percent of eighth graders participate in some type of organized outside-of-school activities.

There is not, however, a strong public sense that the programs and supports offered by this sector are *necessary*.² There is no broad sentiment that the non-formal, non-academic, non-employment experiences, opportunities and skills provided by these organizations are as critical to adult success as is formal, academic education. Nor is there agreement that this sector, or more generally, the "community", is as critical to youth development as is family or school. In part, this is because there is not, among those outside of the youth development "field," a clear sense of whether and why these particular non-formal, non-academic functions are not being performed by families, or cannot be performed by schools.

Without a clear definition of youth development, a cogent discussion of the unique role played by community programs, and at least some evidence that participation in these programs has an impact on youth outcomes, the increased pressure to target limited resources to those young people most at risk of school failure, unemployment and early parenthood may make it difficult not only to enhance but also to sustain the role of community youth programs.

A Framework for Thinking About Youth Development and Youth Development Supports

Youth development, as a term, is used to refer to both a broad goal, a growth process, a specific subset of activities (non-academic, non-employment, non-health related), of organizations (non-profit, voluntary organizations) and even, a specific programmatic approach (participatory, experiential, non-formal instruction). This multiple use of the term is not, in and of itself, problematic. Early childhood development, for example, is used similarly. But because there is not a commonly used body of knowledge that defines youth development in terms of individual outcomes and processes and that informs best practice, the use of the term is weakened.

Youth development programs have come to be so closely associated with the voluntary non-school sector that youth development supports have become defined as the array of activities,

² Interestingly, the few compelling arguments that have called for either improving non-academic programs or strengthening the non-school voluntary sector have done so on behalf of young people who have been designated "high risk" -- youth for whom neither family nor school are functioning well. There is concern, however, particularly among minority groups, about the potential effectiveness of national youth-serving organizations in reaching and serving high-risk youth.

opportunities and resources offered by youth-serving organizations, and youth development outcomes as the goals stated in these organizations' programmatic and mission statements. If policymakers, researchers and the general public are prepared to define education as a process which extends beyond what schools do, then it seems wise to call simultaneously for a definition of youth development that is not attached solely to what youth-serving (often called youth development) organizations do.

We propose that the term youth development be attached firmly to young people, not merely to the institutions that serve them. Youth development has to be seen as an *ongoing process*. Most important, it has to be seen as an inevitable process in which all youth are engaged, *and* all youth are invested. Much of the literature on adolescent development describes the stages through which young people move as they mature cognitively, physically, socially, emotionally. What is absent in that literature, and in our thinking about what we as adults should do for adolescents, is the critical role young people play in this process. (placement of young people themselves as key actors in this process.) We suggest that young people will, even those with limited family support and formal programs, seek ways to:

- 1) meet their basic physical and social needs (some of which change considerably during the course of adolescence);
- 2) build the individual assets (knowledge, skills, relationships, values) they feel are needed to participate successfully and fully in adolescence and life; and use them in self-gratifying and self-empowering ways.

Defined this way, youth development is put, first and foremost, in the hands of youth. It has an inevitability and a wide range--all youth will develop; some in ways that family, peers, community and/or society will define as useful and sufficient; others in ways that may be defined as dangerous, anti-social or insufficient. This definition also has a dynamic quality -- development occurs as part of the ongoing process in which youth negotiate with and respond to not only institutions but family, peers, and community as well. It is not wholly reliant on the formal application of a program or an intervention.

If youth development is what youth do, what then is the role of youth-serving organizations? Their role, clearly, is to support youths' development in ways that family, community and/or society define as important³ -- they are one of several categories of facilitators or, what we will call agents.

Positive youth development agents are the people/organizations/institutions that: 1) take *deliberate* responsibility for helping young people get through the above process while achieving outcomes that family, community and society would define as useful and sufficient; and 2) offer supports, services and opportunities that have *demonstrably positive outcomes*. Specifically, positive youth development agents directly or indirectly help youth in the following ways:

- 1) they meet youths' basic physical and social needs *in ways that are immediately beneficial to them, beneficial or at least not harmful to their families and communities, and contribute to their long-term positive functioning*;
- 2) they build the individual assets *that family, community and larger society feel are important to successful participation in adolescent and adult life*; and encourage youth to use their talents, skills, time and energy *in ways that family, community and larger society would define as either reinforcing their own pro-social learning and/or contributing to family or community*.

This definition of youth development and of youth development agents suggests that there is no single institution, organization, or program that is, can be, or should be responsible for assisting young people in using their ~~time~~ and planning their futures. This is appropriate for both programmatic and policy reasons; we think it important that supporting positive youth development be seen as a common goal shared by all individuals, agencies and institutions that interact with youth and not as the responsibility of a particular subset of these agents (e.g. family and community youth-serving organizations).

³ We should make it clear that we recognize that the specific skills, behaviors and attitudes that families, communities and the broader society define as important are not always the same. There are, in fact, often sizeable differences in the definitions of competence offered young people by different agents within a community (see Ianni, 1989) and even larger differences between the definitions offered by communities (e.g., minority communities) and broader society (Ogbu, 1981).

We recognize, however, that this broad definition of youth development and of youth development agents creates a tension -- if adopted, it effectively discredits the currently common application of the term to subsets of youth assets and needs, of activities and practices, and of programs and organizations. Development of the concept of *primary* youth development agents -- agents that have, as their goal, the provision of supports to youth that aid in their development of several, if not all, assets and respond to several, if not all, of their needs -- may relieve this tension. Under this conceptualization, a youth employment training program or a summer recreation program, while contributing to positive youth development, would not be seen as primary youth development agents. As will be discussed in Section III, the traditional youth-serving organizations as well as the many religious and unaffiliated community-based organizations certainly have programmatic and mission statements that suggest a commitment to performing this role. Their capacity to do so, however, will be strengthened by efforts to define the role independently.

Toward a Theory of Youth Development

How useful the outlined framework is depends on our ability to put it into operation. We will need to come to some agreement about what the terms used to define youth development mean and decide what the criteria are for assessing the strength and direction of influence of agents or broad categories of agents (e.g. schools). In the first part of this chapter we discuss assets and needs – the two key terms in our working definition of youth development. In the second part, we discuss youth development agents.

Defining Competence and Competencies: The Critical Assets

Policy reports and professional/program reports have several common features. First, they state very clearly what the problems are that propelled the writing of the report -- rising numbers of school dropouts, the shrinking entry-level labor pool, the increased alienation of young people. Second, they state, usually with equal clarity, the perceived reasons why the problem has surfaced or escalated. Third, they make recommendations for alleviating the situation. All contain abundant samples of research and statistical evidence to support their premises and programmatic evidence, when applicable, to support their recommendations.

Many of these reports, however (especially the broad policy reports), do not go beyond youth demographics, deficiencies and "failure rates" (the percentage of young people who are out-of-school, out-of-work, unmarried parents, involved with drugs or crime, etc.) as the rationale for recommending changes in current policies or practices. Those that do, however, offer a promising start for thinking about what, beyond the absence or containment of problems, we would like our young people to have learned, experienced or accepted into their individual value systems as they enter adult roles.

James Coleman, in the Report of the Panel on Youth (1974), offers the following list of objectives for youth, arguing that environments for youth which extend beyond the schoolhouse doors need to be massively transformed in order to help youth meet three broad objectives:

1. **personal competence**, defined as having:

- the cognitive skills and non-cognitive skills necessary for economic independence and for occupational competence;
- the capability to effectively manage one's own affairs;
- the capability to be a consumer, not only of goods, but of the cultural riches of civilization;
- the capability for engaging in intense concentrated involvement in an activity;

2. **social maturity**, defined by having:

- enlarged horizons through experience with persons differing in social class, subculture and age;
- a sense of responsibility gained by having the experience of having others dependent on one's actions;
- leadership and membership skills, gained through involvement in interdependent activities directed toward collective goals;

3. **a sense of identity and self-esteem**, derived from having:

- personal competence and social maturity.

In *Turning Points* (1989), the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development suggests that "an effective human being," and in particular, a competent 15-year-old is:

1. **an intellectually reflective person**, one with good problem-solving skills, good oral and written expression, and an appreciation of other cultures and languages;
2. **a person en route to a lifetime of meaningful work**, one who is aware of career options, understands the importance of formal education, has the ability to learn, and has pursued a course of study that keeps occupational options open;
3. **a good citizen**, one who accepts responsibility for shaping surrounding events, understands the nation's history and values, feels responsibility for and connection to the world community;

4. **a caring and ethical individual**, one who recognizes the distinction between good and bad, understands the importance of developing and maintaining close relationships, embraces virtues such as courage, honesty, tolerance, and caring and demonstrates these through sustained service to others;
5. **a healthy person**, one who is physically and mentally fit, has a self-image of competence and strength based on being good at something, has developed self-understanding and appropriate coping skills.

The general themes in these lists are found in other policy documents as well.

- Bastian, et al. (1985) argue that citizenship requires not only academic skills, but critical judgement, social awareness, connection to community and shared values.
- Wynn, et al. (1987) suggest that there are four capacities that adolescents must acquire (and that adults need) to function in society: physical vitality, the ability to sustain caring relationships, resourcefulness, and social connectedness.
- Pittman and O'Brien (1989) suggest that there are five essential areas that define preparation for adulthood: 1) academic education, 2) health, 3) work exposure and experiences, 4) personal growth and development, 5) social responsibility and social awareness.

These policy lists correspond well with the areas of youth development identified by many of the traditional youth-serving organizations as important.

- The programs of the *American Red Cross* are designed to contribute to the development of 1) health promotion, 2) leadership, 3) community service, 4) international understanding;
- The *Boy Scouts'* activities are designed to 1) build character, 2) foster citizenship, 3) develop mental, moral and physical fitness;
- The *Boys and Girls Clubs'* activities promote health, social, educational, vocational and character development;
- *Camp Fire* programs promote individual accomplishment, creativity, cultural and environmental appreciation, citizenship, service and self-reliance;
- *Girl Scouts'* programs have four goals; 1) to develop self-potential, 2) relating to others, 3) developing values, 4) and contributing to society;

- *Girls Inc.* has defined six core content areas for its programs that address 1) careers and life planning, 2) health and sexuality, 3) leadership and community action, 4) sports and adventure, 5) self-reliance and life skills, 6) culture and heritage;
- The *National 4-H Clubs'* programs are designed to foster competency, partnerships, coping skills and contributory skills;
- The *YMCA's* youth development concept incorporates five key components: 1) self-esteem, 2) personal health, 3) employment skills and career goals, 4) education and training, 5) leadership and service;
- The *YWCA's* core program emphasizes five major themes: 1) empowerment, 2) Health promotion, 3) youth development, 4) family life, 5) community leadership.

While the similarities among these lists are apparent, these lists are different enough to suggest that their authors are building upon a common wisdom, not a common theory. There are recurring themes, but not recurring language or structure. Joyce Epstein (1988), in an article on building effective schools and effective students, refers to the "largely untamed" literature on the importance of alterable variables in schools and classrooms. This description is quite applicable to the literature we reviewed.

We have compiled a working list of desired assets for youth that reflect the spirit, the emphasis, and, whenever possible, the language of the many policy and professional documents reviewed. We have used the term *competencies* to describe the five basic areas which define the range of behaviors and skills these reports suggest are needed for adult success:

- **health/physical competence:** good current health status plus evidence of appropriate knowledge, attitudes and behaviors that will ensure future health (e.g. exercise, good diet/nutrition, effective contraceptive practices);
- **personal/social competence:** intrapersonal skills (ability to understand personal emotions, have self-discipline); interpersonal skills (ability to work with others, develop friendships and relationships through communication, cooperation, empathizing, negotiating); coping/system skills (ability to adapt, be flexible, assume responsibility); judgment skills (ability to plan, evaluate, make decisions, solve problems);

- **cognitive/creative competence:** broad base of knowledge, ability to appreciate and participate in areas of creative expression; good oral, written language skills, problem-solving and analytical skills, ability to learn/interest in learning and achieving;
- **vocational competence:** broad understanding/awareness of vocational and (and avocational) options and of steps needed to act on choices; adequate preparation for chosen career, understanding of value and function of work (and leisure)⁴;
- **citizenship competence (ethics and participation):** understanding of nation's, community's history and values, and desire to be involved in efforts that contribute to nation and community.

The decision to use the term competence and to offer the suggested groupings warrants discussion. Many terms were used in the reports reviewed -- goals, skills, characteristics, abilities, needs, outcomes, status. Sometimes, a single list would include several terms (e.g. health status, cognitive ability, employment skills). If there is agreement that one of the reasons to press for a definition of youth development is to increase understanding of the value of addressing the full range of youths' needs, then it seems important to choose a term that 1) has both a broad general meaning, 2) can be used to describe specific sub-areas of skills and behaviors, 3) makes sense to most people, 4) implies both a range of behavior and a desired outcome, 5) suggests that learning and improvement are possible. The term competence seemed to fit these criteria well.

Competence is a highly valued attribute in American culture, both in general ("she is very capable, competent") and in the specific ("he is a competent worker"). It implies an interaction between innate attributes, environmental conditions, and individual effort. It seems concrete, measurable. It suggests standards and strategies.

⁴ We have included avocational competence in this list because there is general concern about the decline in leisure reading and hobbies among adolescents and adults as television watching and video game-playing increases. There is also popular interest in "leisure education" as an emerging growth area (e.g. non-credit adult education) as people both live longer after retirement and have more leisure time during their working years and growing academic interest in the role that leisure time use plays in adolescent development (see Section III).

The five areas of competence suggested could be collapsed or expanded (i.e., personal competence distinguished from social competence; citizenship could be collapsed into social competence). The groupings reflect the emphasis given the areas in the reports reviewed. The particular skills, talents, characteristics and attributes listed after each area of competency reflect the more specific indicators or goals discussed in the reports reviewed. The distribution of the lists reviewed across these five competence areas is shown in Table 1. Tables 2 and 3 show the distribution of the specific indicators or goals that comprised these lists.

We were pleased but not surprised to find that the competence areas emerging from the policy and professional literatures reflect the general dimensions of human development (biological, social, emotional, cognitive), plus three additional dimensions which are sometimes discussed in the academic literature -- moral, vocational and creative. Clearly, it is important that the terms and lists used in a definition of youth development describe the outcomes and not be terms/lists that are completely contradicted or refuted in the academic literature on adolescent or human development. We note, however, that the final definition of youth development does not need to reflect the current nuances of academic thought. Ultimately, it is parents, practitioners, and policymakers who must embrace a new language of youth development and allow it to inform their thinking. This process will be greatly enhanced if we can offer new ideas in a way that builds on their current perceptions.

Competence in Adolescent Development Theory

Competence, as an outcome or set of interrelated outcomes, is not a major theme in the academic literature on adolescent development⁵, but it is discussed. In fact, we found the working definition of competence offered by James Garbarino in his recent textbook on adolescent development so clear that we quote it at length:

⁵ Garbarino (1985), for example, includes a section on competence in his textbook on adolescent development in which he suggests that competence, like the ecological model of development, is an important orienting idea for thinking about development. But competence is referenced only three brief times outside of this chapter.

Table 1. Competency Areas Mentioned in the Sample of Reviewed Literature ¹

Reports & NYSO's ²	Health/Physical	Personal/Social	Creative/Cognitive	Vocational	Citizenship/Ethics	Participation
Coleman		X	X	X	X	X
Carnegie Council	X	X	X	X	X	X
Bastain et. al		X	X		X	X
Wynn et. al	X	X	X			X
Pittman & O'Brien	X	X	X	X	X	X
Elliott & Feldman	X	X		X	X	
Hamburg	X	X	X	X		X
American Red Cross	X	X			X	X
ASPIRA		X	X		X	X
Boys & Girls Clubs	X	X	X	X		X
Boy Scouts	X	X	X		X	X
Camp Fire Boys/Girls		X	X		X	X
Girls Inc.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Girl Scouts		X			X	X
Junior Achievement			X	X		X
National 4-H	X	X		X	X	X
Salvation Army	X	X	X		X	X
YMCA	X	X	X	X		X
YWCA	X	X	X	X	X	X

¹This table is based on summaries of national youth-serving organizations prepared by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development for the Task Force on Youth Development and Community Programs.

² National youth-serving organizations

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We see competence as a set of skills, attitudes, motives and abilities needed to master the principal settings that individuals can reasonably expect to encounter in the social environment of which they are a part, while at the same time maximizing their sense of well being and enhancing future development.

[This definition] means several things. First, it establishes competence as the goal of socialization and development. We are moving adolescents towards fully competent adulthood. They need to be good at something to feel good about themselves and to be good citizens (and workers, and eventually, perhaps, good parents). This gives us goals, and thus standards, with which to evaluate the performance of institutions and individuals that assume responsibility for the well-being and nurturance of youth.

Second, our definition emphasizes positive capacities rather than simply describing the absence of negative characteristics, deviance, or pathology. Some individuals function competently despite these handicaps. Third, our definition recognizes that different social environments -- as defined by social class, ethnicity, or culture -- encourage and reward different things and thus establish different kinds of competence...(p. 80)

Competence may well be the idea that bridges the gap between the academic and non-academic literatures on youth development. Competencies (academic skills, physical fitness, social skills) are some of the main characteristics that parents, practitioners, and policymakers understand. Gabarino calls competence "the currency of development" (p.75). Parents and policymakers alike are more willing to pay for a program or service for adolescents that purports to establish or strengthen competencies than one that entertains or occupies their time.

While discussions of competence are found within specific sub-fields in the adolescent development literature, the overall recognition that adolescents are preparing for adulthood is reflected in discussions of developmental tasks. In contrast to the lists found in the policy and professional literatures, lists of the developmental tasks of adolescence have been extremely consistent over the past 40 years. Robert Havighurst, in 1951, suggested ten tasks that had to be mastered in order for adolescents to become happy and well adjusted adults:

1. Achieving new and more mature relations with age-mates of both sexes;
2. Achieving a masculine or feminine role;

3. Accepting one's own physique and using the body effectively;
4. Achieving emotional independence of parents and other adults;
5. Selecting and preparing for an occupation;
6. Achieving assurance of economic independence;
7. Preparing for marriage and family life;
8. Developing intellectual skills and concepts necessary for civic competence;
9. Desiring and achieving socially responsible behavior;
10. Acquiring a set of values and an ethical system as a guide to behavior.

The language in Havighurst's list of developmental tasks is clearly dated. Gender and sexual identity development, for example, are now seen as much more complex (and less predictable) processes than they were forty years ago. Nonetheless, Havighurst's ten tasks map easily into the five developmental tasks described in the opening chapter of *At the Threshold*, a new edited volume on adolescent development. According to editors Feldman and Elliott (1990, p. 12), adolescents must:

1. Become physically and sexually mature;
2. Acquire the skills needed to carry out adult work roles;
3. Gain increased autonomy from parents;
4. Realign social connections with members of both the same and opposite sex in preparation for mate selection;
5. Resolve issues of identity and values.

The difference between these lists and either the individual or composite lists of competencies reviewed above reflects the basic differences between the literatures. The

Table 2. Specific Indicators/Goals Mentioned in the Policy and Academic Documents Reviewed

Policy & Academic Documents	Health/Physical	Personal/ Social	Creative/ Cognitive	Vocational	Citizenship:	
					Ethics	Participation
Coleman		-manage own affairs -sense of responsibility gained by having others dependent on one's actions	-cognitive skills -consumer of the cultural riches of civilization	-economic independence -occupational competence	-enlarge horizons through experiences with persons differing in social class, subculture & age	-intense concentrated involvement in an activity -leadership & membership skills gained through involvement in inter-dependent activities directed toward collective goals
Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development	-physically & mentally fit	-self image of competence & strength -developed self understanding & appropriate coping skills -understands the importance of developing & maintaining close relationships -accepts responsibility for shaping surrounding events	-problem solving skills -oral & written expression -ability to learn	-aware of career choices -understands importance of formal education -has pursued a course of study that keeps occupational options open	-appreciate other cultures & languages -recognize the distinction between good & bad -embraces virtues such as honesty, tolerance & caring	-understands nation's history & values -feels responsibility for & connection to the world community -demonstrates virtues through sustained service to others
Bastian et. al		-social awareness	-academic skills -critical judgement		-shared values	-connection to community
Wynn et. al	-adequate physical & mental activity	-capacity to give & accept care in return	-possession of practical knowledge & skills -ability to seek & sift information -learn new things -apply knowledge & skills effectively			-sense of affiliation with social community -work to accomplish social goals

Policy & Academic Documents	Health/Physical	Personal/ Social	Creative/ Cognitive	Vocational	Citizenship:	
					Ethics	Participation
Pittman & O'Brien	-understands growth, development & health risks -value of regular health care	-develop self identity, self discipline, interpersonal skills & coping strategies	-basic knowledge & skills -problem solving skills -learning skills	-understands function & value of work -develop healthy work attitudes -exposure to a variety of work environments, jobs & adult workers	-acquire a set of values & an ethical system as a guide to behavior	-understands role in society & societal change -social awareness
Elliott & Feldman	-becoming physically & sexually mature	-gain increased autonomy from parents -realign social connections with members of both the same & opposite sex in preparation for mate selection -resolve issue of identity		-acquire the skills needed to carry out adult work roles	-resolve issue of values	
Hamburg	-understand & adopt health promoting behavior	-form stable human relationships -hope about future -self-monitoring & self-regulation skills	-academic skills -problem solving skills -planning & decision making skills	-wise decisions about life options		-optimize use of social networks

Table 3. Specific Indicators/Goals Mentioned in the Programmatic Missions of Selected National Youth-Serving Organizations¹

National Youth-Serving Organization	Health/Physical	Personal/Social	Creative/Cognitive	Vocational	Citizenship: Ethics	Participation
American Red Cross	health promotion	enhance self-reliance			concern for others & international understanding	community service & leadership development
ASPIRA		develop self confidence	intellectual development		cultural development	community service & leadership development
Boys/Clubs	promote health	character development	educational development	vocational development		social development
Boy Scouts	develop physical fitness	build character	mental development		moral development	foster citizenship
Camp Fire Boys/Girls		develop self-reliance skills	develop creativity & stimulate knowledge/skills		develop values & compassion	develop desire to serve
Girls Inc.	promote health/sexuality & sports	self-reliance & life skills	adventure	careers & life planning	culture & heritage	leadership & community action
Girl Scouts		develop self-potential & relating to others			develop values	contribute to society
Junior Achievement			reinforce academic skills	develop vocational skills		responsive to community's needs
National 4-H	promote health & nutrition	develop positive self-image		assist in employment & career decisions	respect & get along with others	community service & leadership development
Salvation Army	development of body & soul	promote good character	intellectual development		promote neighborli-ness	community service & leadership development
YMCA	improve personal health	build self-esteem	provide education & training	develop employment skills & career goals		develop desire to serve
YWCA	promote health, sports participation & fitness	personal development	educational development	vocational & avocational training	eliminate racism	advocate political & social change on women's behalf

¹ This table is based on summaries of national youth-serving organizations prepared by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development for the Task Force on Youth Development and Community Programs.

developmental lists suggest a concern for the transition process from childhood to adulthood -- some of the tasks sever the adolescent from childhood, others move him or her into adulthood. The competence lists, on the other hand, are completely forward looking. As shown in Table 4, these perspectives are not incompatible. The heavy emphasis on individual psycho-social tasks (five of the ten tasks listed by Havighurst fall into the emotional/social competence category) reflects the dominant themes in adolescent development theory and research. The developmental tasks remind us of the enormous individual changes that adolescents must deal with at the same time they are "acquiring the skills needed to carry out adult work roles" (Feldman and Elliott, p.12). The competency list, we hope, will stand as a reminder of the complex array of skills (many of which hinge on the successful completion of the developmental tasks) that are needed to function as an adult.

A Closer Look at the Development of Personal and Social Competence

It is beyond the scope of this paper to review the literatures that address each of the five areas of competence in order to assess the degree of consensus on the specific components and indicators of each. We felt it important, however, to offer a brief discussion of social competence. This broad area is the focus of much of the supports and programming offered by community organizations. It is clearly recognized as a key predictor of both adolescent problems and adult success. Most important, it is increasingly being seen as an area in which formal interventions 1) can have an impact and 2) need to be developed.

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development established a Life Skills Training Working Group that issued an in-depth report which opens with a discussion of life skills training:

Life Skills training is conceptualized as the formal teaching of requisite skills for surviving, living with others, and succeeding in a complex society. Because of profound changes in our society over the past few decades, it can no longer be assumed that these skills are automatically learned. Contemporary adolescents need help in acquiring a range of social competencies to cope with academics, to meet fundamental challenges of forming stable human relationships, to maintain hope about their future, to understand and adopt health promoting behaviors, to make wise decisions about life options, and to optimize use of social networks. Adolescents need general problem solving skills, planning and decision making skills, cognitive strategies for resisting peer or media influences, skills for increasing

Table 4. Relationship between Adolescent Development Tasks¹ and Adult Competencies

Transformation from Childhood	Preparation for Adulthood	Adult Competencies
- Accept a masculine or feminine role - Accept one's own physique & use the body effectively		- Health/Physical
- Achieve new & more mature relations with age-mates of both sexes - Achieve emotional independence of parents & other adults	- Prepare for marriage & family life - Desire & achieve socially responsible behavior	- Personal/Social
	- Develop intellectual skills & concepts necessary for civic competence	- Creative/Cognitive
	- Select & prepare for an occupation - Achieve assurance of economic independence	- Vocational
	- Acquire a set of values & an ethical system as a guide to behavior	- Citizenship: Ethics/Participation

¹ As defined by Havinghurst 1951 and Feldman and Elliott 1990.

self-monitoring and self-regulation, coping strategies to deal with every day stresses.... A need currently exists to teach these life skills in a formal and systematic fashion with the logical focus of life skills training efforts being the early adolescents in middle/junior high school (p.3).

As this quotation shows, the list of specific skills that fall into this broad category that we have labelled personal and social competence is sizeable. H. Stephen Glenn and Jane Nelsen (1989) cluster these skills into four categories:

1. *Intrapersonal skills.* The ability to understand personal emotions, use that understanding to develop self-discipline and self-control, learn from experience;
2. *Interpersonal skills.* The ability to work with others and develop friendships through communication, cooperation, negotiation, sharing, empathizing, and listening;
3. *Systemic skills.* The ability to respond to the limits and consequences of everyday life with responsibility, adaptability, flexibility, and integrity;
4. *Judgmental skills.* The ability to use wisdom and evaluate situations according to appropriate values.

In Table 1, we have used these broader categories as a way to organize the specific skills discussed in the reports reviewed. As can be seen in Tables 2 and 3, personal and social competence is the area in which there are the most specific listings in the policy, academic, and professional literatures.

Defining Needs

As just discussed, policy and programmatic recommendations for improving supports for adolescents and/or increasing the proportion of adolescents who make successful transitions to adulthood are often based on assessments of desired competencies and orientations. However, many are also based on assessments or impressions of adolescent needs. In these reports, need is used in two ways. Often, lists of needs are actually lists of required/desired competencies translated into "need" language (e.g., adolescents need to develop solid academic skills). In some reports, however, particularly those calling for the expansion of positive roles for youth (Schine,

1989; Calhoun, 1990; Nightingale et al, 1988; Rolzinski, 1990), recommendations are (were) based on a discussion of adolescents' more fundamental unmet needs -- the need to belong to a group, the need to feel valuable, have a sense of self-worth, the need to feel in control of one's life, the need to have a close relationship with at least one person. These larger themes appear consistently enough that we have incorporated them into our working conceptualization of youth development.

Glenn and Nelsen (1989), in addition to the four levels of personal and social competence listed above, include three other factors in their list of "seven critical building blocks" for "developing capable young people" (p.49):

- perceptions of personal capabilities;
- perceptions of personal significance in primary relationships (meaningful contributions, sense of being needed)
- perceptions of personal power or influence over life.

Glenn and Nelson see these "critical" perceptions as the key to attitudes, motivation, behavior. They make a clear distinction between perceptions and skills:

...we define a perception as the conclusion we reach as the result of an experience after we have had time to reflect on that experience. A skill is simply something we know how to do. While perceptions result from the thought process alone, it takes practice to acquire a skill (p.51).

This distinction was made in the policy and programmatic literature reviewed as well. Practitioners, researchers, and social commentators are increasingly concerned that the current supports and opportunities for adolescents, particularly for those who are low-income and minority, are neither helping youth acquire essential skills, nor providing experiences critical to the development of self perceptions.

David Hamburg, for example, in his annual essay as President of the Carnegie Corporation, suggests that:

...there appear to be fundamental human needs that are enduring and crucial to survival and healthy development, including and most particularly --

- the need to find a place in a valued group that provides a sense of belonging;
- the need to identify tasks that are generally recognized in the group as having adaptive value and that thereby earn respect when skill is acquired for coping with the tasks;
- the need to feel a sense of worth as a person;
- the need for reliable and predictable relationships with other people, especially a few relatively close relationships -- or at least one.

...There are a variety of major indicators showing that, in many contemporary societies, we are failing to provide avenues for the affirmation of fundamental needs to large numbers of adolescents....It may be necessary to think about creating a sea change in the preparation of young people for adult life, taking into account the drastic world transformation that has occurred and is still rapidly under way. In such a sea change, the crucial period of early adolescence must have an important role in our thinking.

Recent arguments for the expansion of community service roles for youth, the formalization of youth participation, the establishment of mentor programs, reflect a growing concern that our young people, and in particular early adolescents, are not developing strong feelings of belonging or self-worth. They also reflect increased recognition that there is an interactive relationship between competencies and perceptions. Adolescents who have valuable skills are more likely to feel competent and be able to contribute than those who do not; adolescents who feel competent are more likely to be open to developing and improving their skills than those who do not.

Psychological Research and Theory on Basic Human Needs

Abraham Maslow laid the groundwork for humanistic psychology in 1954 when he introduced the theory of human motivation based on a hierarchy of needs. Maslow argued that there were five levels of need -- physiological (e.g. hunger), safety, belongingness and love, esteem (feelings of self-worth), and self-actualization. Interestingly, Maslow specifically writes that self-actualization cannot be achieved by adolescents:

Self-actualization does not occur in young people. In our culture, at least, youngsters have not yet achieved identity or autonomy, nor have they had time enough to experience an enduring, loyal, post-romantic love relationship... Nor have they worked out their own system of values; nor have they had experience enough (responsibility for others, tragedy, failure, achievement, success) to shed perfectionist illusions and become realistic...

The needs and perceptions discussed by Hamburg and by Glenn and Nelsen fall into Maslow's third and fourth categories of needs -- the need for belongingness and love, and the need for self-worth. Maslow's second need, safety, is becoming an increasingly important issue, especially for young adolescents, both because of the after-school supervision problems that have accompanied the rapid changes in family composition and women's employment, and because of increased violence and opportunities for dangerous behavior. Given the growing importance of these issues, we have added safety to the synthesized list of needs. We suggest, then, six basic human needs:

- a sense of safety and structure;
- a sense of belonging/group membership;
- a sense of self-worth/contributing;
- a sense of independence/control over one's life;
- a sense of closeness/relationships;
- a sense of competence/mastery.

The Special Needs of Young Adolescents

Much of the work of the Center for Early Adolescence has focused on defining the characteristics of supportive environments for young adolescents. Their work is based more

broadly on research and theory about early adolescents. Their list of the "needs" of adolescents reflects what is known about early adolescents both as a group (e.g. they vary enormously in physical, emotional, cognitive, social maturity) and as individuals (e.g., they are preoccupied with physical and sexual concern). Based on Dorman's work on the Middle Grades Assessment Program (1981), Lefstein and Lipsitz (1986) suggest that 10- to 15-year-old adolescents have seven needs:

- 1) *Diversity*: the need for a wide range of experiences to accommodate large variations in development in this age group;
- 2) *Self-exploration and definition*: the need for opportunities for informal discussion, exploring the world around them;
- *3) *Meaningful participation*: the need to use their talents, assume responsibilities;
- *4) *Positive interaction with peers and adults*: the need to work with peers in small groups, pairs, teams; opportunities for being with non-family adults;
- 5) *Physical Activity*: the need to exercise and move (programs must recognize the large differences in size and ability);
- *6) *Competence and achievement*: the need for variety of opportunities for success and reward, opportunities for service to others;
- *7) *Structure and clear limits*: the need for clear rules and structures which they have had some role in developing (p.7).

These lists of "early adolescent needs" overlap with the above list of "basic human needs" but are not entirely consistent. For example, four of the seven needs listed by Lefstein and Lipsitz (marked with asterisks) reflect broader human needs (negotiated structure and limits relates to the more basic need for control over one's life). Three, however, reflect needs specific to young adolescents.

Just as we found it useful to distinguish between the developmental tasks that allowed adolescents to break away from childhood and those that actively prepared them for adult life, we think it useful to distinguish between these two types of needs. The broader human needs (membership, self-worth, independence, closeness, competence, closeness) contribute to

adolescents' sense of self-empowerment. The more time-limited developmental needs, we sense, do not contribute to self-empowerment in a direct way, but if not met, they can contribute to adolescents' feelings of disempowerment because the adolescent is in an inappropriate environment. Thus, we suggest a second needs category – developmental needs – which complements the larger category of basic human needs and alerts us to the specific needs of this sub-age group (Table 5). These are:

- the need for diversity in opportunities and expectations;
- the need to explore self and environment;
- the need for physical activity;
- the need for supervision and structure.

The Relationship between Needs and Self-Esteem

In the psychological literature, these perceptions/needs are seen as the basis of self-esteem. Harter, for example, in her review of the literature on self and identity development (1990), reports on earlier research in which she identified, through factor analysis, eight specific domains of *self-perception*:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| • scholastic competence | • social acceptance |
| • athletic competence | • physical appearance |
| • job competence | • close friendship |
| • romantic appeal | • conduct |

Several of the lists reviewed by Harter in this analysis included psychological indicators such as strong, positive self-concept, high self-esteem, strong sense of identity as characteristics of well-functioning youth and adults. While we agree, we have not included self-esteem or self concept in the list of personal and social competencies because they are not skills. *Adolescents cannot be taught to have high self-esteem*. However, their self-esteem will improve as their personal and social skills develop, their academic competence increases, and their opportunities to contribute in positive ways develop. Similarly, we have not included self-esteem in the list of basic social

Table 5. Basic Human and Adolescent Needs

Basic Human Needs
sense of safety/structure sense of belonging/group membership sense of self-worth/contributing sense of independence/control over one's life sense of closeness/relationships sense of competence/mastery
Early Adolescent Needs
need for diversity in opportunities/expectations need to explore self and environment need for physical activity need for supervision

needs. The psychological literature suggests that it is the cumulative result of the perceptions of significance, competence, closeness and membership.

Self-esteem is a term that is making its way rapidly into programming and it is even beginning to appear in policy reports. Research findings that show a correlation between low self-esteem and problem behavior are being used to justify the development of curricula and programs aimed at improving self-esteem. Improved self-esteem can and should be listed as a desired or expected program outcome, but we think that it is erroneous to list it as a program goal since it cannot be influenced directly. The psychological --- suggest that self esteem is actually the result of multiple personal perceptions based on and influenced by multiple competencies. Competencies can be developed, relationships built, needs met, but positive self-esteem cannot be taught or bestowed; it must be earned. As we will discuss later, we maintain that the programs and supports which influence self-esteem the greatest are the same ones which affect competencies, orientations, and needs most strongly.

The Relationship between Needs and Competencies: Implications for a Theory of Positive Youth Development Agents

If the role of positive youth development agents is not only to support the development of competencies and positive social orientations, but also to help youth develop strong positive self-perceptions built on socially acceptable, socially beneficial behaviors, then positive youth development agents *should focus as much on the nature of the environment as they do on the content*.

Brendtro et al. (1990), in *Reclaiming Youth at Risk*, build their recommendations for changes in youthwork practice, by suggesting that "reclaiming" environments offer youth opportunities to:

- 1) experience belonging in a supportive community, rather than being lost in a depersonalized bureaucracy;
- 2) meet their needs for mastery, rather than enduring inflexible systems designed for the convenience of adults;
- 3) become involved in determining their own future, while recognizing society's need to control harmful behavior;

- 4) be care givers, not just helpless recipients, overly dependent on the care of adults.

The authors make an explicit connection between their definition of reclaiming environments and their premise that one of the primary tasks in working with high risk youth is fostering self-esteem. As reflected in their list of environmental characteristics, they define the components of self-esteem as belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity.

Lipsitz, in *Growing Up Forgotten* (p.83), quotes Don Wells, a private school headmaster, on the disparity between the research on early adolescents and the programs designed for them:

- **Fact:** Early adolescents need to try on a wide variety of roles.
Response: We class them in...few roles to make them a manageable lot.
- **Fact:** Early adolescents vary enormously...in physical, mental and emotional maturity and capability.
Response: In schools chronological age is still the overwhelming factor used in grouping students.
- **Fact:** During early adolescence the development of control over one's life through conscious decision making is crucial.
Response: Adults make all meaningful decisions for almost all early adolescents almost all the time...
- **Fact:** Early adolescence is an age where all natural forces... are causing precipitous peaks and troughs in their entire being.
Response: We demand internal consistency of the early adolescent, and in schools even punish some for not achieving this consistent state despite the fact that it is totally impossible for many to achieve at this point in development.
- **Fact:** Early adolescents need space and experience to "be different persons at different times."
Response: We expect them to be what they said they were last week because otherwise we cannot do *to* them with forethought.
- **Fact:** Early adolescents are preoccupied by physical and sexual concerns, frightened by their perceived inadequacy.
Response: We operate with them each day...as though such concerns did not exist at all.

- **Fact:** Early adolescents need a distinct feeling of present importance, a present relevancy of their own lives now.
- Response:** We place them in institutions called "junior high schools" which out-of-hand stress their subordinate status to their next maturational state, and then feed them a diet of watered down "real stuff"...

The above list presents the distinction between **content** and **experience**. What Lipsitz and others have done, in attempting to transfer knowledge about adolescent development into practice, is to convince policymakers and practitioners that there is an interactive relationship between schools in which early adolescents excel and schools which structure experiences that support rather than suppress the needs of their young students. The series of reports produced over the past three years that offer major recommendations for reshaping the environment of middle schools is impressive. This momentum for changing the middle grades needs to be put in a larger context, one that grounds these school-focused efforts and informs others. The ideas of content and experience -- which relate directly to youth competencies and youth needs -- offer a solid foundation upon which to build working definitions of positive youth development agents and primary positive youth development agents.

Mapping the Actors that Influence Youth

If the role of positive youth development agents is, as argued earlier, to help youth meet their physical and social needs in ways that are beneficial to them and their families and communities, and build the competencies they will need to participate successfully in adult life, then the theory described below and visualized in Figure 1 may take us a first step toward being able to conceptualize, if not quantify 1) differences between the many individuals, organizations and institutions that influence young people, and 2) the impact that multiple agents have on youth outcomes.

We have defined youth development as an ongoing process through which young people attempt to meet their needs and develop the assets (competencies) they perceive as valuable, both currently and in the future. Based on the literature just reviewed, we offer several hypotheses about this process:

Figure 1.

A Framework for Mapping Youth Development Agents



- The individual needs that combine to determine feelings of self-esteem/self-empowerment are cumulative and interactive and should not be ranked (i.e., we should not argue that group membership is more important than close relationships, for example). The same is true for the individual competencies that combine to determine overall competence.
- Needs and competencies are interactive. Young people who feel competent are more likely to seek new tasks than those who do not feel competent; those who have good social skills are better able to build and maintain positive relationships than those who do not; those who feel that they are both a valued member of a group and can have an influence on the course of their lives and others are more likely to participate in community activities than those who do not.
- Needs can be met (and competencies used) in socially acceptable and socially unacceptable ways. Young people will attempt to find ways to meet their basic needs (which includes finding areas in which they can feel competent), even if this means moving in directions that are not approved of by family, community, society. If the people and institutions (the agents) whose task it is to assist and guide youth in the development of the competencies seen as necessary for adult functioning do not help youth meet their needs, youth will find other vehicles.

Whether and how young people meet their basic needs and apply the competencies they develop depends in large part on the strength and direction of influences in their lives. Research and theory suggest that family, peers, school, community groups, religious organizations, places of employment, plus larger forces such as neighborhood resources, and the job market all are important determinants of youth development (Benson, 1990; Bogenschneider et al., 1990; Feldman and Elliott, 1990; Ianni, 1989).

In the preceding chapter, we introduced the idea of positive youth development agents which we defined as the people, organizations or institutions that take deliberate responsibility for helping young people meet their needs and build assets in ways that family, community and/or society find useful and sufficient. Having reviewed the literature on adolescent development and youth issues, we can now put this definition in a broader context. We assert that:

- Every individual, program, organization, group with whom an adolescent interacts is not an agent.

- All agents do not have a substantial and positive impact on youth. Complementary influences are reinforcing and have an enhancing effect on youth development; competing influences are confusing and have a dampening effect.
1. **Agents have an influence.** If we reserve the term youth development **agent** for the people, programs, institutions, and structures with whom youth are either required to or choose to interact *that have an influence on their growth and development*, we force a distinction between program (or professional) and agent. A program or professional may have no impact on either meeting youths' needs or developing competencies; an informal grouping of adolescents/adults may have a substantial impact. Equally important, this definition of agent also forces independent evaluation of the nature of the impact. Schools, for example, may have a negligible or even negative impact on the overall development of many youth, even though they are seen as the primary positive youth development institution. Gangs, conversely, may serve many positive functions for youth (offer a sense of structure and belonging, hone social skills) even though they have clear negative consequences.
 2. **Influence can vary in both strength and direction.** We offer the following hypotheses about how the strength and the direction of an agent's influence can be predicted:
 - Agents that address multiple needs have a larger potential impact on youth development than do those that address a single need; agents that address multiple competencies have a larger potential impact on youth development than those that address a single competency.
 - Agents that address both multiple needs and multiple competencies will have the largest potential impact on youth development. These agents should be considered *primary youth development agents*.
 - Even though their goals are positive, *agents that create an environment that disempowers youth* by actively inhibiting their ability to contribute, to form close relationships, to master any tasks which are perceived as important, etc. cannot be considered positive youth development agents.
 - Even though their impact on needs and competencies may be positive, *agents that encourage young people to develop self-limiting and/or socially undesirable*

behaviors or to apply their skills in self-limiting and/or socially undesirable ways (e.g. gangs) cannot be considered positive youth development agents.

- *Primary positive youth development agents*, then, are agents that address the multiple needs of youth and foster the development of competencies and behaviors that are seen as desirable and important by family, community, society.

These hypotheses are graphically shown in Figure 1. The horizontal axis represents the five competencies which will be learned primarily through program content.⁶ The vertical axis represents the six basic human needs that will be met primarily through experiences. At the high end of the vertical axis, agents are creating environments and structuring experiences that allow and encourage adolescents to fulfill their basic human needs and their age-specific needs. At the low end, they are creating environments and experiences that have the opposite effect, i.e., that are *disempowering*. Whether positive or negative, the greater the number of needs the agent attempts to or does influence, the greater the potential impact on the adolescent (the school example mentioned above).

The horizontal axis is competencies. Again, with agents that attempt to/or do influence multiple competencies placed farther along the axis than those that influence fewer, on the right side of the axis are agents that have, as their goal, developing desirable competencies (as defined by family, community, society) and/or those that encourage the application of competencies to approved and valued tasks (the gang example).

⁶ Ogbu's (1981) insistence that we back away from the idea that children who do not display the early signs of developing "white middle class" competencies are being raised by ineffective parents, and that we embrace the much more useful idea that these children are being effectively raised to assume different competencies addresses Ianni's observation exactly. We have, in Figure 1, labelled the horizontal axis competencies and specified that agents be located on this axis according to the extent to which they promote socially appropriate or socially inappropriate use of competencies. As this working theory is elaborated, we will have to specify carefully both whose definition of competencies is being used (reflecting Ogbu's concerns) and how congruent the "community definitions" are (reflecting Ianni's observations).

The Role of the Voluntary Sector in Promoting Positive Youth Development

We were charged with two tasks in writing this paper: first, to offer a working definition of youth development based on existing theories and discussions; second, to offer the strongest possible case for strengthening the role of the non-school voluntary sector in promoting youth development, given existing evidence. Having defined youth development in sections I and II of this report, we now turn to the second task.

Clearly, if presence counts for anything, one argument for strengthening the capacity of this sector to do youth development programming is that, according to our definition of youth development, it already is doing youth development programming. On average, the mission statements of the major national youth-serving organizations address four out of five competence areas and state a commitment to non-formal learning. There are some 400 national youth-serving organizations listed in the latest *Directory of American Youth Organizations*, grouped into 17 categories that range from sports to self-help to political. There are over 17,000 U.S. non-profits that classified themselves as youth development organizations. Seven out of ten eighth graders report that they participate in outside-of-school activities.

Presence does count. The ubiquity of these organizations and programs suggests one reason to make them a focus of attention. While far from a cohesive network of actors, these thousands of community organizations and programs do offer a vehicle for reaching youth. Major investment and endorsement of this sector as a primary vehicle for promoting positive youth development, however, will require more than enrollment statistics.

A rationale for strengthening the role of the non-school voluntary sector must be based on one if not both of two types of evidence:

- evidence that demonstrates that participation in non-school voluntary organizations (or in the types of programs typically offered by this sector) is perceived as valuable by youth and adults and found to have a positive and significant impact on any of the competencies and/or needs outlined in the working definition of youth development;

- evidence that non-school voluntary organizations play instrumental, supplementary and/or unique roles in youth development because of what they offer young people and when, how and where they offer it.

The first type of evidence is empirical. *Do parents and other adults see these experiences as valuable? Do youth who participate in organized after-school activities have lower dropout rates? Do those who participate in community service programs have greater commitment to community? Do teens involved who are members of youth-serving organizations have better social skills? Do teens who participate in youth groups have greater tolerance of different cultures? Do adolescents find their experiences in youth-serving organizations valuable? Do they express a need for more opportunities to participate in these organizations or in the types of programs that these organizations typically provide?*

The second type of evidence is theoretical and analytical. It requires two steps. First, it involves an extension of the discussion of youth development from definition to strategies for promotion. *How are social skills developed and reinforced? How is citizenship fostered? How is substantive knowledge and cognitive ability best learned and applied? How is the world of work best explored? How are close relationships formed and maintained? How are preventive health attitudes and behaviors best taught and reinforced?* Second, it involves an analysis of the structure and practices characteristic of organizations in the non-school voluntary sector and a comparison of these characteristics to the strategies list. *How do the missions and structures of voluntary youth-serving organizations differ from those of schools? What are the main differences in programs and practices?*

While not exhaustive, our research review strongly suggests that both types of evidence exist. This evidence, however, needs organization. In the sections that follow, we present a brief picture of the sector, summarize the evidence found on its impact on youth development, and suggest what evidence is still needed.

A Snapshot of the Non-School Voluntary Sector

There are many ways to categorize the wide range of organizations grouped under the heading "youth-serving." Judith Erickson, in *The Directory of American Youth Organizations*, divides national youth-serving organizations into seventeen groups ranging from sports organizations to ethnic heritage groups to character-building organizations. William Treanor, executive director of the American Youth Work Center, suggests that there are five streams in American youth work, four of which fall into the non-school, non-public sector (1988, p.2):

- church-based youth work -- Catholic Youth Organizations, B'nai B'rith Youth Organization, Young Life, etc;
- Turn-of-the-century, uniformed British imports -- Boy Scouts, YMCA, YWCA, and similar programs;
- Recreation-based programs, such as Little League, the Police Athletic League, and other outdoor adventure programs;
- Publicly financed programs of the settlement house or War on Poverty lineage;
- Alternative youth service programs -- hotlines, free clinics, runaway youth shelters, group homes, job cooperatives, alternative schools.

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development's Task Force on Youth Development and Community Programs is working with a list that divides the universe of relevant organizations into six large groups:

- National youth organizations (those affiliated with the National Collaboration for Youth such as Girls Inc., the Boy Scouts, Big Brothers/Big Sisters and those not affiliated such as ASPIRA, American Camping Association);
- Multi-purpose national organizations that provide some youth services (those affiliated with NCY such as YMCA, YWCA and the Association of Junior Leagues International and those not affiliated such as the National Urban League and the NAACP Youth Division);
- Grassroots youth development organizations (those unaffiliated with any national group);

- Religious youth groups;
- Youth programs conducted by adult service clubs, senior citizens groups, museums;
- Selected public sector institutions (such as parks and recreation, sports, public libraries).

There is no definitive categorization of the organizations in this "sector." Indeed, the cluster of non-school organizations that offer youth programs cuts across several more commonly recognized sectors (e.g. public, religious, civic). These organizations are by no means a monolithic group. They range from a collection of large national structures that serve several million youth each year with budgets in the tens of millions of dollars to thousands of community programs that are so small they do not have to file tax returns. There are substantial differences within this group in focus and scope of mission and programming, commitment to working with high-risk youth and in high-risk environments, stability and diversity of funding, size and training of staff. In spite of these differences, however, the majority of these organizations do share some common characteristics, especially when contrasted with schools.

Mission and Tradition.

As described in Section II, the national youth-serving organizations, as a group, have broad missions that center around the development of personal and social skills, leadership skills and an orientation to service. The missions of non-affiliated community-based organizations that serve youth, while sometimes different, are often equally broad. The New York City-based Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families, for example, one of the oldest "alternative youth service" programs in the country, states that its goals are:

1. To keep families intact;
2. To provide additional educational instruction;
3. To provide professional social services;
4. To create healthier neighborhoods;

5. To develop a countervailing force in communities in which there is an increasingly powerful drug subculture.

In addition, most of the long-standing youth-serving organizations and many of the grassroots organizations have strong traditions and philosophies that define their use of volunteers, their commitment to service and sometimes to advocacy, and their approach to the delivery of services in the communities of which they are a part.

Size and Structure.

Again, while there is sizeable variation at the community level, voluntary youth-serving organizations tend to be smaller and more loosely structured than schools. A recent Independent Sector analysis revealed that seventy-nine percent of the 17,657 non-profit organizations that classify themselves as youth development organizations have operating budgets of less than \$25,000 (and therefore do not have to file federal tax returns). The loose structure, diverse funding base and heavy use of volunteers that seems to typify these organizations contribute to their recognized flexibility -- sometimes by choice, sometimes by necessity, these organizations have the ability to change the content and structure of programming and supports much faster than do schools.

Programs and Practices.

In addition to these organizational characteristics, the voluntary organizations that serve youth can also be distinguished by what they offer and how they offer it. Their broad mission translates into distinctive programs and practices. Again, a broad brush picture of these organizations would show that they offer a wider array of programs and supports than do schools, place a higher value on youth participation, and rely heavily on non-formal educational methods.

We did a content analysis of the organizational profiles of the fifteen national youth-serving organizations prepared by staff of the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development's Task Force on Youth Development and Community Programs and of profiles of an additional 25 non-affiliated community youth programs, most of which worked with low-income and minority youth. Two points emerged: 1) while the processes are largely the same, the type of programs offered by the national and the non-affiliated youth-serving organizations reviewed is overlapping but different; 2) the program content and program practices offered/used correspond very well with the competencies and needs outlined in the previous section.

Programs

Table 6 lists the programming areas mentioned by national and community organizations. The programs are grouped under the five competence areas developed in Section II. The national organization list corresponds closely with the mission statements reviewed in Section II. Health education and health-related prevention services such as alcohol, drugs and, to a lesser extent, pregnancy were not mentioned as frequently as community service or life skills but were mentioned by a majority of the organizations. Delinquency prevention and social services were mentioned by a minority. The non-affiliated organizations, in contrast, devote a noticeably higher proportion of their programming to prevention, counseling, remedial education and social services. Drop-out prevention, homework help, job training and placement were program staples among the organizations reviewed. The service emphasis -- health care (including family planning), social services, crisis intervention, counseling, case management and referrals -- separated these organizations from their nationally-affiliated counterparts. Accompanying the emphasis on service was an emphasis on family. The community-based organizations examined commonly listed parental and family supports as part of their array of programs and services. Absent of national guidelines, mission statements, programming standards, and long-standing traditions, these community-based organizations may be both more aware of and more able to respond to community needs.

Table 6. Programs Offered by National (NYSO) and Community Based (CBO) Youth-Serving Organizations by Competency Areas

Health/Physical	Personal/Social	Creative/Cognitive	Vocational	Citizenship Ethics	Participation
NYSO -sports -recreation - health education -prevention of high-risk behaviors -nutrition	-self-reliance -safety -peer tutoring - counseling -life/social skills -social services* -delinquency prevention*	-science, math, technology & computer education -arts exposure - participation -outdoors & nature education	-career education	-ethics & values education	-community service
CBO -sports -recreation - health education -prevention of high-risk behaviors - health care services -family planning	-peer tutoring* -counseling -case management -survival skills -social services -delinquency prevention -parenting education -referral services -parental/family support -crisis intervention	-academic enrichment -homework & tutoring -computer education* -drop-out prevention -culture and history -field trips	-job training & placement	-culture & history	-community service

*Programs are offered by a minority of the organizations reviewed.

The emphasis on prevention and services may well reflect the reality that they are dealing with young people who are at greater risk than those who are members of the nationally-affiliated organizations -- references to "survival skills" rather than "social skills" suggest the difference in target groups. The inclusion of many of the same content areas, however, suggests a recognition of the basic idea behind youth development -- prevention is not synonymous with development; a problem-free young person is not necessarily a fully-developed, capable young person.

The non-affiliated organizations reviewed were, given the Independent Sector information on youth development non-profits, at the high end of the income range, especially for organizations that serve predominantly low-income and minority young people. The breadth of services they offered may reflect this relative wealth -- smaller non-affiliated organizations may have a narrower focus. There is evidence to suggest, however, that the focus narrows from the other end of the continuum. While the national organizations weigh heavily on the youth development rather than youth problem/social services side, smaller community-based organizations in disadvantaged neighborhoods may offer predominantly prevention, remedial and support services. Littell and Wynn (1989), in a recent study of two Chicago neighborhoods (one affluent suburban neighborhood, "Greenwood," and one low-income inner city neighborhood, "Innerville") found that

...a young person in Greenwood is more likely to find an organized activity of particular interest or one that will enable him or her to develop new interests. The options for Innerville youth, meanwhile, are restricted to activities in which a majority of young people are interested (e.g. sports) and programs aimed at preventing specific problems (e.g. teen pregnancy, dropping out, drug use, and gang activity) (p.29).

One of the main reasons for the limited offerings in Innerville, they suggest, was funding:

Of the activities identified in Innerville, 90% were available to youth free of charge... In Greenwood...33% of the activities were free. While, in Innerville, activities may have to be provided free of charge in order for young people to take advantage of them this constraint may severely hamper organizations' capacity to develop and sustain a variety of options for youth (p.33).

The balance between prevention/remediation and promotion seen in the aggregate list that represents the programming of large community-based organizations suggests that this list may

be the near-ideal list of programs and services that should be offered disadvantaged youth. Achieving this balance in more programs will require two strategies: 1) pressing mainstream national youth-serving organizations to increase their prevention, intervention and support services; 2) funding small community-based organizations to develop and sustain a wider variety of youth development programs and services.

Practices

It was not surprising to find that the programs offered by national and community-based youth-serving organizations span the competence areas well, given the match between mission statements and competence areas. We were surprised, however, at how well the specific service delivery practices and strategies used (e.g. small groups) by the organizations spanned the six basic human needs and addressed many of the specific developmental needs of adolescents (Table 7).

Among those organizations reviewed, the almost universal use of small groups, flexible grouping practices, symbols of membership (e.g. uniforms, t-shirts), and clear structures (e.g. regular meetings, codes of conduct) reflects an organizational and programmatic recognition of the importance of structure, belonging and group membership to adolescents. Similarly, the frequent references to participation in decision-making -- both the opportunity to choose from a variety of activities and the opportunity to have one's opinions heard and represented -- reflect a recognition of the importance that this type of involvement has to both the growth of decision-making abilities and the development of a sense of control over one's life. What stands out the most, however, is

the emphasis on providing youth with manageable challenges that allow for progress, rewards and the development of a personal sense of achievement. This conscious emphasis on broadening the opportunities for success, reward and recognition contrasts sharply with the approach often taken in schools and, as we suggest later in our discussion of leisure theory, may contribute heavily to the popularity and success of these programs.

In Section II, we suggested that the similarities in the mission statements of the national youth-serving organizations reflect a common wisdom and philosophy if not a common theoretical base. Clearly, the program practices used by these organizations and by community-based youth-serving organizations (there were virtually no differences in these lists) suggest a basic understanding of adolescent needs.

We recognize that every organization does not meet every need and address every competence area. The programming in some organizations, for example, is very adult-driven; youth get structured choices but little opportunity to make large decisions. Nonetheless, the degree to which national and community youth-serving organizations have mission statements and programs that reflect the suggested list of competencies and use practices which are sensitive to and respectful of youths' needs is impressive. The remaining question then is, do these programs and practices make a difference? Empirical evidence and theoretical argument suggest that they do.

A Sampling of Empirical Evidence

Evidence exists that strengthening youth programming within the non-school voluntary sector makes sense for a variety of reasons. *Young people, particularly, young adolescents, may spend too much time alone:*

- One-quarter of the eighth-graders surveyed for the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 reported spending two or more hours alone each day after school.
- An ongoing survey of sixth- through twelfth-graders in predominantly middle-sized communities found that, on an average school day, five of 10 sixth-graders and almost six of 10 junior and senior high school students spend two or more hours at home without adult supervision (the question implied time alone both before and after school.)

Teachers and school administrators feel that isolation contributes to school problems:

- A 1987 study conducted by Louis Harris and Associates for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company found that a majority of the more than 1,000 teachers interviewed cited isolation and lack of after-school supervision as major reasons that children have difficulty in school.
- Thirty-seven percent of principals who responded to a 1988 survey done by the National Association of Elementary School Principals felt that children would perform better in school if they were not left unsupervised for long periods of time outside of school. Twenty-two percent reported having before- or after-school programs in their buildings; 84 percent agreed that such programs were needed.

Young people and their parents want programs in the schools and neighborhoods:

- Asked what supports they thought would be helpful when youths could not be with parents after school, the most frequent responses given by third- through twelfth-graders in a St. Louis survey were "a safe place to go if they are afraid," "planned activities in the school building," "after-school programs in the neighborhood," and "ideas about how to take care of yourself after school."
- One-third of the students surveyed in this St. Louis poll said that the community should offer more low-cost activities for youths and ensure safety at places where teens congregate.

- A 1983 survey of Oakland sixth-graders and their parents found that regardless of income, race, or ethnicity, three-quarters of parents felt that organized activities were an important part of their children's education. The sixth-graders surveyed felt they had plenty of free time but too little to do during that time that was worthwhile or interesting -- 41 percent reported being bored and at a loss for things to do.

Young people value and want more programming to help them build personal and social skills:

- Nearly four out of 10 teens polled in a 1988 survey sponsored by the American Home Economics Association felt that schools, at best, do only an adequate job of teaching the life skills necessary for responsible and productive adult life.
- High school seniors surveyed in a Minnesota youth poll in 1983 indicated that social and personal skills were some of the most important things they learned in school.

Young people and adult alumni value their participation in non-school youth programs:

- Alumni of youth-serving organizations report that their membership contributed significantly to their personal development. A 1987 survey of alumni of 4-H and other youth groups found that, on average, alumni felt that their participation had contributed to their personal development in nine areas: pride in accomplishment, self-confidence, ability to work with others, ability to communicate, ability to set goals, employment skills, leadership skills, and community involvement.
- Eighty-one percent of the girls surveyed in a recent Harris poll commissioned by Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. report that Girls Scouting is either very or somewhat important to them. Girl Scouting is especially important to black and Hispanic girls and to girls living in urban areas. Six out of 10 black Girl Scouts and more than four out of 10 Hispanic and American Indian/Alaskan Native Girl Scouts reported that Scouting was personally very important to them compared to one-third of whites and one-quarter of Asians. Forty-four percent of Girl Scouts living in urban areas said scouting was very important compared to 33 percent in the suburbs and 27 percent in rural areas. The reasons given for why Girl Scouting was important were that it offered opportunities for fun, learning, making friends/meeting new people, and service.
- A 1986 Louis Harris survey of 1,202 Boys Clubs of America alumni reported that nine in ten alumni who had participated in Boys Clubs from 1920 through 1980 felt that their experiences had a positive effect on their lives, given them skills for leadership, helped them get along with others, and influenced their success later in life. For a majority of the former members, the Boys Club was a place they could

go in the neighborhood to participate in organized activities, find refuge from the streets, and be part of a support system against delinquency and drug abuse.

Similarly, it is not difficult to present evidence that participation in non-school programs and organizations (or in the types of experiences that characterize non-school programs) builds competencies and reduces problems⁷:

- A study of 865 10- to 15-year-olds in Madison, Wisconsin found that young adolescents without after-school activities were more susceptible to peer pressure to engage in undesirable behavior than children with after-school activities.
- Two-thirds of the young people surveyed in youth participation programs in Israel and the United States reported that they learned more or much more in their community experiences than in their average class in school. Additionally, participants showed greater increases in problem-solving skills, in their levels of personal and social responsibility, and in their attitudes toward people different from themselves than did non-participants (Hedin and Eiskovits, 1982; Conrad and Hedin, 1982).
- Among sixth through twelfth graders who are in single-parent families or families with a history of abuse or parental addiction, those who participated in religious organizations, school extracurricular activities or community clubs and organizations were significantly less likely to exhibit "at-risk" behaviors than those who did not. For example, 42 percent of the youth who reported no at-risk behaviors were involved in community clubs and organizations compared to only 29 percent of those who reported five or more at-risk behaviors (Benson, 1990).
- Several studies have found that participation in extracurricular activities appears to have a positive effect on educational attainment and to later participation in voluntary organizations. (Hanks and Eckland, 1978; Otto 1975; Spady, 1971). Similarly, participation in voluntary activities and associations is associated with adult participation in civic and political organizations and in the political process in general (Ladewig and Thomas, 1987; Hanks, 1981).
- Participation in community service programs appears to have the broadest impact on youth competencies. A survey of a random sample of ACTION volunteers age

⁷ This review draws from and builds upon an earlier literature review done by Joan Wynn et al. of the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. We are indebted to their exhaustive work and reprint their original table as Appendix A with their permission.

12 to 23, in the Young Volunteers for ACTION program found both gains in understanding of community service, ability to work with others, development of career objectives, increased willingness to learn and reduced need for supervision. (ACTION, 1986). Other studies of service participants found similar improvements in personal and social skills, vocational skills, orientations and earnings, and appreciation and continued involvement in community service (Hamilton and Fenzel, 1978; Wolf, 1987).

As youth-serving organizations, particularly the national organizations, recognize the need to both document and assess their impact, there is a growing amount of research that speaks specifically to the short-term and long-term benefits of participation in these organizations.

- A majority of current Girl Scouts surveyed by Louis Harris and Associates for GSUSA report that Girl Scouting gives them "a lot" of opportunities to work with other girls on activities, make new friends, learn about things like good health and safety. More than two-thirds reported that Scouting gives them an opportunity to gain new skills, do something good for the community, learn to cooperate, become more sensitive to the needs of other people.
- In four consecutive annual evaluations, participants in the Teen Outreach Program sponsored by the Association of Junior Leagues International -- a school-based life-skills management and community service program for high school and middle grades students -- were less likely than their non-participant peers to have experienced either pregnancy or school failure. In the four years ending in 1988, TOP participants had, on average a 16 percent lower rate of school suspension, a 36 percent lower rate of school drop out, and a 42 percent lower rate of pregnancy than students in the control group.
- The preliminary evaluations of the Boys and Girls Clubs' new housing project-based substance abuse prevention program, Smart Moves, are both impressive and surprising. Outside evaluators found that, while the differences between the impact of Clubs without Smart Moves and Clubs with Smart Moves on the lives of youth and adults in housing projects were not great, the differences between the housing projects that had clubs and those that did not was substantial. Compared to those without Clubs, the projects with clubs had fewer unoccupied or damaged units, lower estimated rates of drug activity and substance abuse, higher rates of parental involvement in the community and a substantially greater presence of recreational facilities and recreational, educational and drug abuse prevention programs.
- A 1989 follow-up survey conducted by ASPIRA staff to measure the effect of their Public Policy Leadership Program found that 32 percent of the participants were

enrolled in school government, 63 percent involved in a school club with more than half holding offices. Three-quarters of those surveyed reported that they felt more assertive and self-confident as a result of the program and had improved leadership skills.

While the research reviewed suggests that participation in extra-curricular programs, including those sponsored by youth-serving organizations, has its strongest impact on personal and social skills, reduction of at-risk behaviors, and current and future participation in civic, voluntary, and political organizations, documented impacts were found in every competence area.⁸ These impact studies, especially when coupled with the strong reports that participants in youth-serving organizations and programs find their experiences very valuable for these same reasons -- personal and social development and service -- suggest that these organizations and programs do more than fill a small void in young people's lives. They develop personal and social skills through structured programs, provide sustained interaction with adults and peers and link the youth to the larger community. These opportunities complement the formal learning found in schools, and the research reviewed suggests they are valued and important.

Clearly, however, given the understandable concerns about high-risk behaviors among youth and youth in high-risk environments, organizations in the voluntary sector should be assessed not only on their ability to "make a good kid better" but to help those in trouble or at risk of getting into trouble. While not formally evaluated, there are many non-affiliated community-based organizations that have demonstrated sustained commitment to and success with these young people.

The national youth-serving organizations, however, have a more mixed record. Some, have made formal commitments to serving low-income and minority youth, working in high-risk environments and situations, and/or addressing pressing youth problems. The majority of youth

⁸ The relatively small number of studies reporting an impact on health attitudes, health status or improved health behaviors reflects both questionnaire design as much as it does lack of impact although, as noted earlier, the mainstream youth-serving organizations do not, for the most part, include health services or referrals in their programming.

served by both Girls Inc. and Boys and Girls Clubs, for example are members of minority groups. Others, however, still serve a predominantly white, middle class population and offer little programming that tackles controversial issues such as teenage pregnancy prevention. Most fall in between these extremes, aware of their need to broaden their reach and deepen their programming.⁹

There are two points to be made. First, as noted in the research review, the evaluated prevention programs designed and offered by national youth-serving organizations appear to be both reaching young people and having an impact. Second, and perhaps more important as a guide to future research, there is some evidence that, with little or no modification, the basic programming offered by these organizations is well received by minority, high-risk and low-income youth. For example, while Girl Scouting programs do not reach deeply into minority communities (about 9 percent are black, 9 percent Hispanic, 3 percent Native American, Alaskan Native; Brown and Conn, 1990), the programs are rated higher by these populations than by whites.

The interim evaluation of the Boys and Girls Clubs SMART Moves program may be the best evidence we have to date of the impact that a comprehensive youth service program, without add-ons, can have in a high risk community. As just reviewed, the location of the Clubs in housing projects had much more impact on risk-taking behavior than did the SMART Moves program itself. The evaluators comments are worth noting:

"Boys and Girls Clubs with or without SMART Moves address the most serious and pressing problems that face children and adolescents who live in public housing. ...Comprehensive and sensitive services for youth in housing projects without Boys and Girls Clubs are practically nonexistent, leaving youth susceptible to a host of threats and dangers.

Boys and Girls Clubs is one of the few national youth-serving organizations that has service to disadvantaged young people as their primary mission. It would be naive to think that a national organization without its history and experience could move into a very high-risk environment, like a housing project, and achieve the same impressive results. But this finding should give pause to

⁹ The National 4-H is an example of a national youth-serving organization that has recently made a formal commitment to reaching vulnerable youth through its national "Youth at-Risk" initiative.

those within and outside of national youth-serving organizations, who may be too quick to assign "at-risk" youth to "at-risk" programs. The limited "added value" of Smart Moves may well point to weaknesses in the program design, content and implementation. It may also, however, reflect the strength of the basic Boys and Girls Club experience suggesting that the basic program content and practice -- the things that make Y's and Scouts and 4-H and the non-affiliated, community-based programs fun and rewarding programs to be involved in -- need to be more carefully examined and researched. We clearly need to have a better theoretical and empirical understanding of the importance of experiences in community programs on the development of adolescents and young adults.

A Sampling of Supportive Theories

The empirical evidence that non-school community programs do make a difference in young people's lives may not be all that we would want, but the theoretical groundings exist in the general literature on the role of community in adolescent development, in the literature on leisure time use, and, most strongly, in the recent literature on middle grades reform.

Theories of Community

The ecological model of human development formalized by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and applied by researchers such as Garbarino (1985) and Bogenschneider et al. (1990) sees individual development as the result of a series of ongoing interactions and adaptations between the individual and a set of overlapping systems that relate both to the individual and to each other. Thus, adolescents are influenced most by family, school, church, peer group, community programs (see Figure 2) -- the microsystems in Bronfenbrenner's terms. These, microsystems, however, connect to form larger systems (mesosystems) that have an added impact on youth.

Peter Benson in *The Troubled Journey* (1990), offers strong empirical evidence that validates this theory of additive levels of influence. His work is reinforced by the ongoing work of Bogenschneider, Small and Riley at the University of Wisconsin. Benson defines twenty at-risk indicators covering nine major problem areas such as alcohol, drug and tobacco use, sexual

activity, school behavior, and anti-social behavior. Using the ecological approach, he then looks for evidence that internal and external assets (e.g. parental standards, positive school climate) and individual deficits (e.g. unsupervised time at home, stress, physical abuse, and negative peer pressure) have an impact on at-risk behavior. Bogenschneider et al. do a similar analysis using the concepts of protective factors and risk factors.

We have summarized the main findings of the two studies in Table 8. A quick read of these factors brings several points into focus:

- there are protective and risk factors at work in every system -- family, peer, school, work, community.
- the factors, both protective and risk, map almost perfectly into our lists of competencies and needs with adequate performance in the competence areas (e.g. cognitive/creative, personal/social) and adequate fulfillment of needs (e.g. belonging to a supportive community, close relationship with at least one person) related to little or no at-risk behavior and inadequate performance or needs fulfillment related to multiple at-risk behaviors.
- competencies have a value not just in the adult world, but in adolescence. The timely development and reinforcement of academic, social, vocational and citizenship competencies has a strong preventive effect on the development of risk-taking behavior.

One additional point needs to be made that is not shown in the Table. Assets appear to be cumulative. The more assets an adolescent has, the lower the likelihood that there are at-risk behaviors. Sixth through eighth graders with zero to 10 assets had twice as many at-risk indicators as those with 11 to 20 assets, four times as many as those with 21 to 25 assets and ten times as many as those with 26 to 60 assets. Equally important, Benson reports at least preliminary evidence about the importance of having assets across the spheres of influence. Using four key assets (positive school climate, family support, involvement in structured youth activities and involvement in church or synagogue), Benson finds that at-risk indicators are reduced almost on a one-to-one basis as key assets are added (figure 3). Sixth through eighth graders with no key assets have an average of four at-risk indicators, those with one show three, those with two show

two, those with three show 1.4, those with four show nine. Benson does not, in this report, use his data to analyze the robustness of each of the assets (e.g. how much does structured activity contribute among adolescents who have family, school, and church/synagogue assets). This is certainly an area for future study.

The Importance of Youth Programs and Community Organizations

In the ecological model, community refers to more than community programs. It refers to the range of formal and informal supports and risks that exist outside of the family. Wynn et al. (1987) have defined community supports in a very practical way:

Community supports are both the informal and the organized resources within communities that contribute to the physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development of individuals. Community supports include (1) opportunities to participate in organized, ongoing groups, (2) avenues for contributing to the well-being of others, (3) sources of personal support, and (4) access to and use of community facilities and events including museums, libraries, parks, civic events, and celebrations (p.11).

They go on to discuss the importance of community supports for adolescent development:

For adolescents, we believe that community supports provide a link between the contexts of family and school and a wider world of issues, events, and people. Through direct experience, community supports offer opportunities to learn practical and social skills and to apply and consolidate academic skills and interests. Community supports provide forums for taking on aspects of adult roles such as the care of others. They offer adolescents chances to test a variety of potential work roles, to seek and supply support across generations, and to develop a sense of competence and responsibility...(p.11)

The separate contexts for socializing adolescents -- families, schools, peers, the media, the workplace, and communities -- have distinct functions in enhancing the development of youth. One context cannot take the place of others. Nevertheless, one of the values of community supports is that they can respond and accommodate to the changing structure and function of other socializing contexts for adolescents (p.13).

Community programs are only one form of community support. Are they critical? The Youth Committee of the Lilly Endowment suggests that they are:

Youth development ought not be viewed as a happenstance matter. While children can, and often do, make the best of difficult circumstances, they cannot be sustained and helped to grow by chance arrangements or makeshift events. Something far more intentional is

Table 7. Program Practices of National and Community Based Youth-Serving Organizations by Youth Needs

Safety/ Structure	Belonging/ Group Membership	Self-worth/ Contributing	Independence/ Control Over Life	Closeness/ Relationships	Competence/ Mastery	Diverse Opportunities/ Exploration
-safe environment -structure -age appropriate activities -regular meetings -codes of conduct	-small groups -flexibility grouping -uniforms/ symbols of membership -recognize ethnic & cultural diversity	-peer tutoring -active participation -project presentations	-decision making	-youth/adult partnerships -role models -family & community involvement	-progression -achievement -accomplishment -rewards	-flexibility -range of experiences -informal education -hands on experience learning

required: a place, a league, a form of association, a gathering of people where value is placed on continuity, predictability, history, tradition, and a chance to test out new behaviors. (p.3)

Some of the strongest arguments for strengthening community programs come from the field of education and theories of learning. Lipsitz (1986), Sarason (1982) and others have argued eloquently that education is enhanced when it is offered in real-life settings outside of the classroom. Weinbaum (1990) reviewed literature from a number of disciplines that has addressed the problems of improving adult and youth literacy including cognitive psychology and anthropology. Included were ethnographic studies of how adults and youth learn in their families, communities and workplaces (Raizen, 1989; Berryman, 1988; Fingeret, 1990; Sticht, 1987). She concluded that the literature suggested that people learn more effectively when:

- the functions and reasons for learning are clear;
- instruction and curriculum build on past experiences and knowledge;
- instructors recognize that learning is not linear but rather recursive, i.e., that neither youth nor adults learn simple things first and complex things later. Most are capable of complex thinking at the same time that they are going back to learn or relearn very basic skills.

The findings also reveal that people often learn more effectively in their communities and workplaces (Raizen) or in educational programs that use materials and problems drawn from the workplace (Sticht) than in traditional educational programs. Yet, until recently, however, the link to "real life" was only being made for students at the extremes of the educational continuum. Those in elite private schools were encouraged to do independent work in science laboratories and in community projects, and those at risk of dropping out were often placed in or encouraged to join work-study programs. Work-study programs, on-site learning programs, were seen as effective dropout prevention and dropout recovery programs. The recent surge of interest in community service has been the first sign of widespread attention to the idea that opportunities to apply what one has learned outside the classroom are useful for all students.

Table 8 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE "AT RISK" BEHAVIOR ¹	
PROTECTIVE FACTORS/ASSETS	RISK FACTORS/DEFICITS
INDIVIDUAL	
-problem solving skills, intellectual ability -self-esteem, self-efficacy, personal responsibility -social/interpersonal skills -religious commitment, involvement in church	-anti-social behavior, hyperactivity -rebelliousness -social isolation -stress -hedonistic values -TV overexposure
FAMILY	
-close relationship with at least one person -family support -parent as social resource -parent communication	-poor parental monitoring -distant, uninvolved, inconsistent parenting -unclear family rules, expectations, rewards -at home alone
PEER	
-a close friend -positive peer influence	-association with peers engaged in similar behaviors -negative peer pressure
SCHOOL	
-achievement motivation -educational aspirations -school performance -homework -positive school climate -involved in school extra-curricular activities	-school transition -academic failure -low commitment to school -absenteeism -desire to drop out
WORK	
-required helpfulness	-long work hours
COMMUNITY	
-belonging to a supportive community -bonding to family, school, other social institutions -other adult resources and communication -involved in community organizations	-low socio-economic status -complacent/permissive laws and norms -low neighborhood attachment, community disorganization, high mobility -media influences

¹ Factors listed are drawn from Benson (1990) and Bogenschneider et al. (1990)

Figure 2. Influences on Youth Development (from Bogenschneider, Small and Riley, 1990)

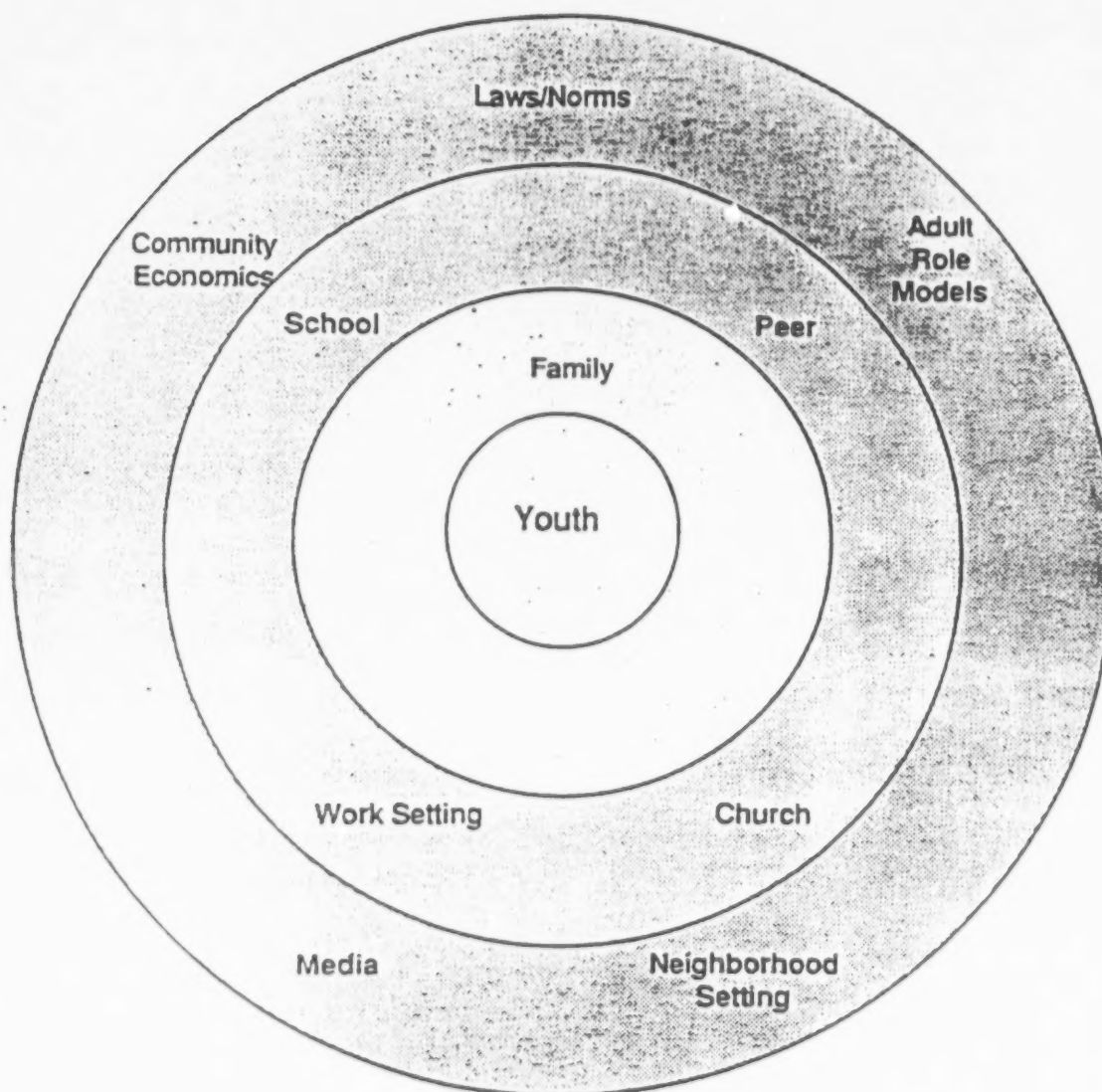
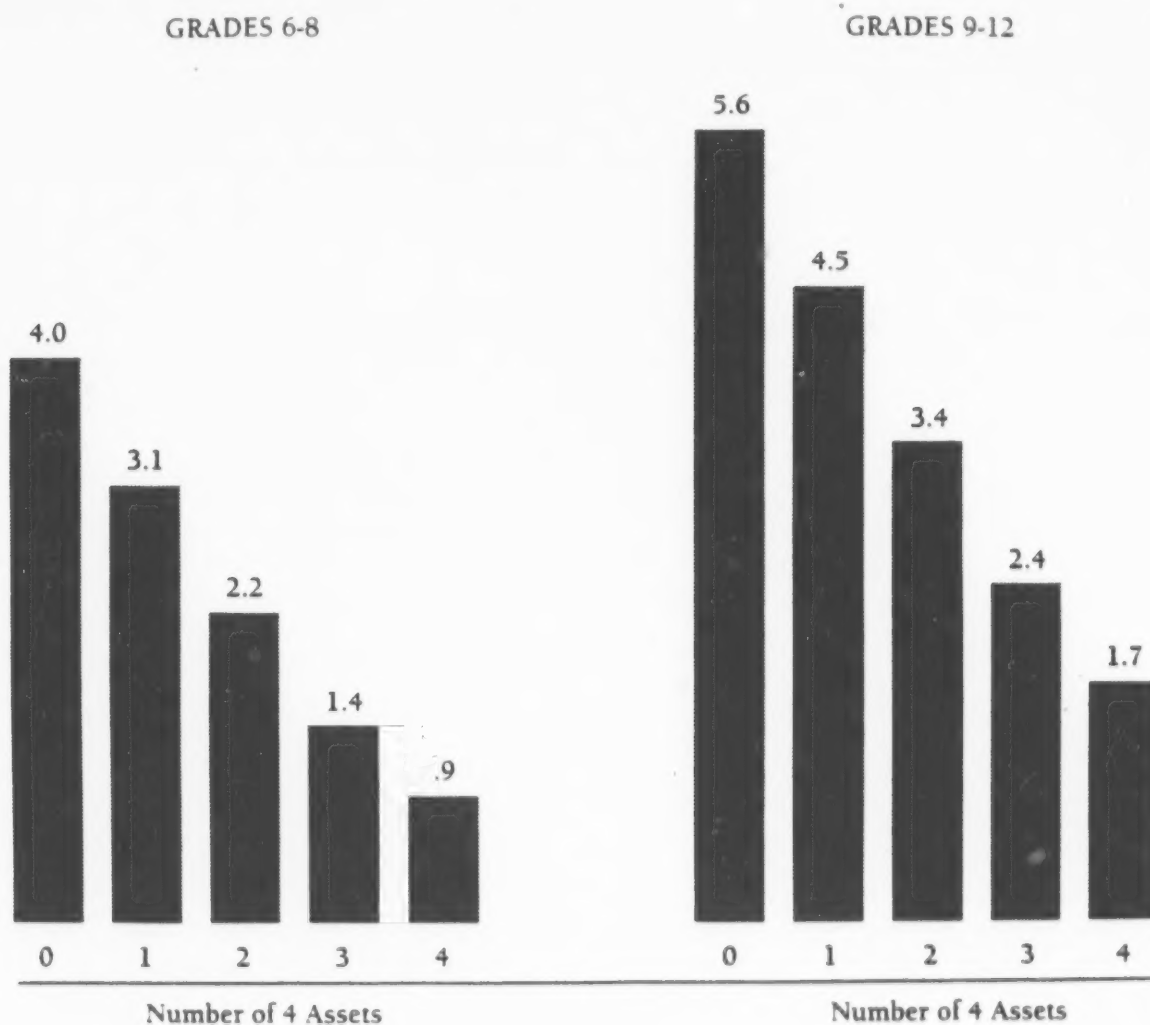


Figure 3. THE UTILITY OF A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY APPROACH

This figure displays the average number of at-risk indicators (out of 20) as they relate to the following 4 assets that students have: positive school climate, family support, involvement in structured youth activities (school-based or community-based), and involvement in church or synagogue.



Benson, Peter. (1990). "The Troubled Journey: A Portrait of 6th-12th Grade Youth." Prepared for Lutheran Brotherhood and its RespecTeen program.

Interestingly, the recent work on middle grades reform, while school focused, gives one of the strongest endorsements for community programs. Youth-serving organizations are much closer to realizing the vision set forth by middle grades reformists than are schools. Epstein, in a thought-provoking article on building effective students, introduces the idea of TARGET structures -- tasks, authority, rewards, grouping, evaluations, and time. She argues that the content, difficulty, interdependence and sequencing of tasks can be varied to make learning enjoyable; that student participation in planning and decision-making; that more and varied systems of reward should be developed so that student progress is adequately recognized and student enthusiasm encouraged rather than drained; that students should be grouped flexibly and heterogeneously; that standards for evaluation are set that give students insight into their own effort and abilities; and, that connections be made between time and task.

These themes came through clearly in both the content and practice of the programs of youth-serving organizations presented earlier. Flexibility, decision-making, leadership skills, teamwork, structured paths for achievement, were all themes that emerged repeatedly from the published literature of youth-serving organizations. Equally important, they are themes that are carry out in practice.

A second, emerging field that offers support for the strengthening of community programs for youth is the field of leisure. The idea of high yield leisure activities being developed (Clark, 1988; Larson and Kleiber, unpublished) has direct implications for community youth programs. Clark argues that there are five types of activities that occupy children's time:

- professionally guided, formal learning activities;
- deliberate out-of-school learning and work activities;
- high-yield leisure activities;
- recreational activities;
- health maintenance activities.

Clark argues that the balance of these activities is very highly correlated with academic achievement:

Achieving youths tend to pursue an activity pattern that is wholesome, nurturing, and balanced in the sense that these youngsters spend approximately 20 to 35 hours a week or more doing various high-yield leisure and deliberate learning activities. The rest of their out-of-school time is spent doing health maintenance and recreational activities. In addition, they spend time learning in better organized classrooms each week.

Underachieving youngsters typically spend less time attending school; that is, they attend school less often. Even when they go to school regularly, they are likely to be in classrooms where students spend less time learning – 7.5 hours a week engaged in the learning process in comparison to the 17.5 hours that students get in the better organized classes. They are likely, also, to spend much less time engaged in deliberate learning and work or high-yield leisure activities. They spend time in recreational activities, watching TV and videos...and other kinds of "hanging out" activities (pp.12-13).

The implications of Clark's thinking and research for community programs are enormous. First, these are the organizations that have, as we have documented, traditionally emphasized engaging youth in deliberate out-of-school learning, high-yield and recreational activities. These are also the organizations that have the flexibility to change the mix of programs and opportunities offered and to provide more formal learning activities, when needed and, at the other extreme, offer safe and inviting facilities for "hanging out."

Larson and Kleiber present a thorough theoretical argument for elevating adolescent free time activities to the level of developmental importance attached to childhood play. They argue:

It is our position that [free time] activities provide important opportunities for the development of self-direction, self-expression, and motivated involvement. Free time activities such as socializing, sport, playing a musical instrument, or even in some cases, deviant activities provide a transitional link between the spontaneous play of childhood and the more disciplined activities of adulthood (p. 3).

The authors develop criteria for evaluating leisure time activities; ranking high activities that provide both enjoyment and challenge and are voluntary (the adolescent chooses the task and can set goals and assess progress in relation to personal standards). They define "transitional activities" as adolescent activities that are both "enjoyable and self-motivating while generating challenges consistent with development into adulthood" (p.8). Their conclusion, after analyzing the individual data collected from adolescents followed and monitored by beeper throughout the course of their normal days:

...sports and art/hobbies/organizations stand out as the most consistent forum for immediate adjustment and positive development. They are associated with active enjoyment and provide clear opportunities for the development of skills that are most likely to be useful in adulthood.

Larson and Kleiber's study highlights an important characteristic of community youth programs that is so dominant that it did not show up as a program characteristic -- these programs are, with a very few exceptions, voluntary. Young people can, as they say, "vote with their feet." The accessibility of organized programs, structured activities and loose groupings of other adolescents and adults that adolescents can join, but do not have to join, meets, as they note, a very key human need -- the need for achieving some direction and control over one's life. These experiences are not easily gained in either family or school.

Strong Evidence is Still Needed

General support for community programs might be achieved by using short, powerful pieces of evidence (the "bullet" approach to evidence-building). Indeed, this type of evidence may be central to any short-term gains in recognition and support. But our review of the literature and sense of the climate suggests that changes in attitudes toward this sector and changes in mission, commitment and programming within this sector will have to be based on more deliberately accumulated evidence. Making a strong case will require going beyond *documenting* the role of this sector toward *defining* it through the presentation of empirical and theoretical evidence that 1) links its contributions clearly to the public concerns about youth problems, schooling and work, and 2) traces its contributions to the distinctive characteristics of the organizations that comprise the sector and the programs and practices that typify them.

The current sentiment toward youth encourages efforts that focus on either the reduction of youth problems or the promotion of academic and vocational competencies. But the mission and programming of these voluntary organizations has traditionally stressed neither. *Is there any evidence that problems and competencies are inversely related? Is there empirical evidence that these competencies are enhanced when other competencies and the broader needs defined are*

addressed as well? Is there any evidence that improvements in academic and vocational competence are an indirect result of programs that just address the other competence areas and/or the basic social needs?

Similarly, while changing, the current bias is still toward single-problem or single-competency programs or approaches. But many of the voluntary organizations that offer programs for youth take a deliberate "whole child" approach. *Is there empirical evidence that programs that address multiple problems, build multiple competencies or, ideally, address both problems and competencies are either more cost-effective and/or have greater impact than single-problem/competency focused programs or approaches?*

William Treanor states these dilemmas eloquently in his essay, "Barriers to Developing Comprehensive and Effective Youth Services." Speaking of the first issue of problem focus, he writes:

The engine that has driven youth services in America -- and the misperceptions that drive those services today -- is the theory of youth deviance (p.8).

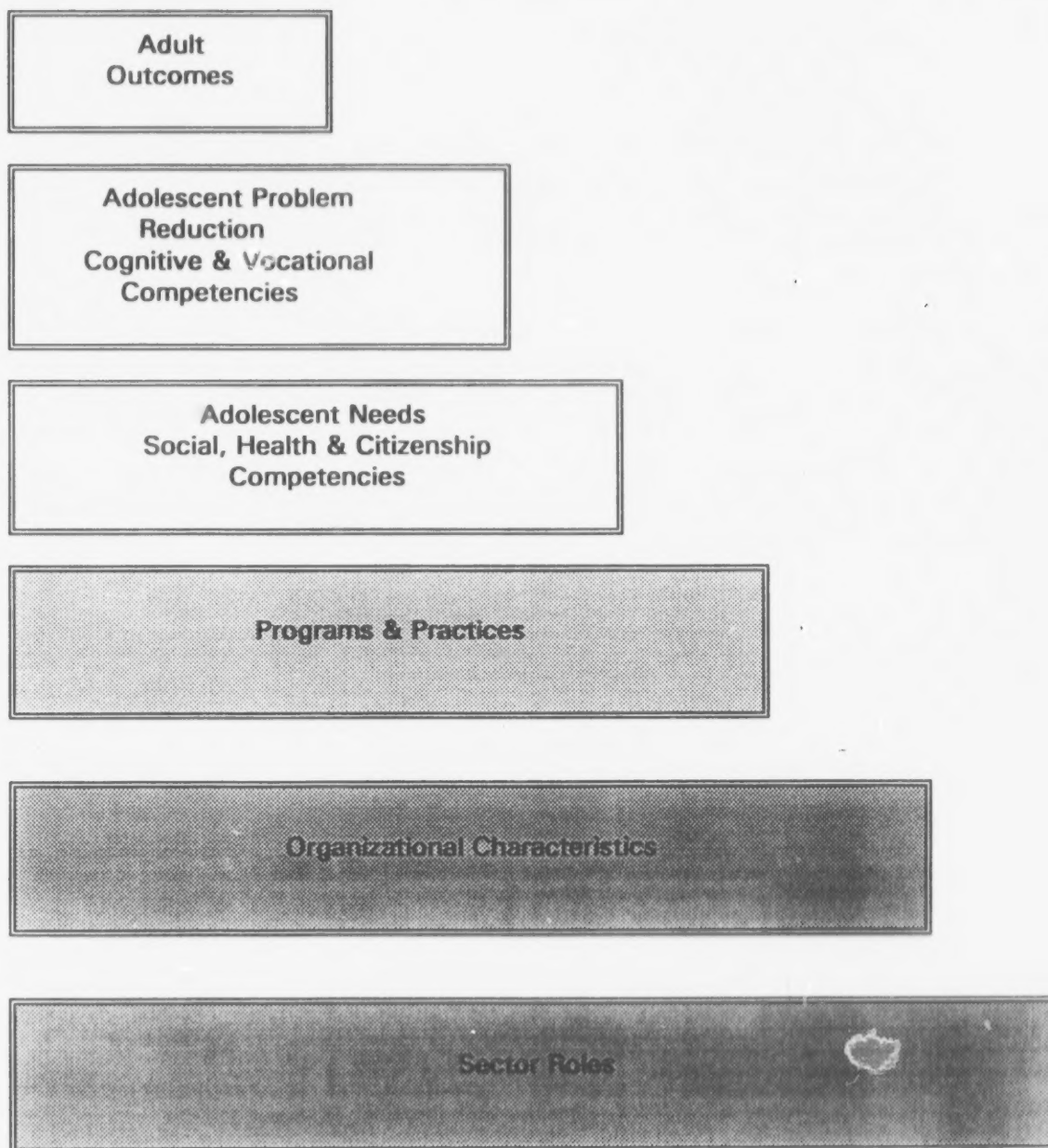
...the prevalent American attitude toward youth is that they need services outside the family/educational/religious mainstream only when they are involved in deviant or socially dysfunctional behavior or are in imminent danger of becoming so (p.13).

Government, other funders, and service providers themselves have often been unaware of the need to educate the public and policymakers on the inescapable need to provide a range of interrelated services to all young people, particularly to those at risk.

In practice...a local government would not fund a program to make youth workers available to assist teens on a broad range of needs. A program could only hope to be funded by touting its ability to combat a deviancy -- for instance, drug use, vandalism, or crime...(p.9).

The empirical and theoretical evidence reviewed suggests that the non-school voluntary sector plays an important role in youth development. Building a case for strengthening that role should be compelling enough to change the views of those in the youth-serving sector and alter how Americans view the needs of its youth. Ultimately, this will require much more than a collection of surveys stating that participation in the programs and receiving supports that typify this sector are beneficial to young people. As we noted in Section I, very few would argue that these supports

Figure 4. Levels of Influence



are not beneficial. The bottom-line questions are: Are these programs and supports critical to youth development, and is there a reason why these supports are delivered better by the various community programs in the voluntary sector? Answering the first question requires making strong connections -- empirical and theoretical -- between several levels of data/knowledge

(Figure 4):

- Connections between problem behaviors -- establishing the interrelationship between problem behaviors;
- Connections between problems and competencies -- establishing the preventive effects of competencies;
- Connections between "first tier" competencies (academic and vocational skills) and "second tier" competencies and needs;
- Connections between specific program content and practices and improvements in competencies, needs fulfillment and problem behavior reduction.

Answering the second question will require the establishment of several additional levels of evidence:

- Evidence that individually or in the aggregate, non-school youth-serving organizations offer the program content and use the program practices that are known to lead to improvements in competencies, needs fulfillment and problem behavior reduction.
- Evidence that program content and practices are tied to/flow naturally from certain organizational characteristics that are disproportionately found among the non-school organizations that serve youth.
- Evidence that this sector, which represents the organized programming for youth in most communities, plays a unique, supplementary or even compensatory role in youth development when compared to the roles of family, schools, business, etc.

The task -- to build the strongest case for strengthening the capacity of the voluntary sector to do youth development programming -- was more complex than it first appeared. Connecting the activities and services of a sector to a set of individual outcomes requires the establishment of several intermediate empirical bridges, none of which have been clearly defined. We have

identified many of the larger links in the evidence chain outlined above, but the task is enormous. Research syntheses of the connections between problem behaviors and between problems and competencies are still being done (Dryfoos, 1990, Benson, 1990). A language and methodology for exploring connections between "first tier" competencies and "second tier" competencies and needs is still being perfected (Benson, 1990; Bogenschneider et al., 1990). The evidence of connections between specific program characteristics and specific needs and competencies would probably be overwhelming if it could be gathered from the many disciplines in which it now resides (e.g., delinquency, education, psychology). This is a task far beyond the scope of this paper but is certainly doable.

CONCLUSION

We feel there is a strong case for strengthening and better defining the role of community programs in youth development. The case begins with a clear, operable definition of youth development and then moves into a careful analysis of what community organizations are doing and can potentially do. In this paper, we have only begun to build this case. But in the course of reviewing documents and rethinking research findings, we have become even more convinced of the importance of finding *politically saleable* ways of strengthening this important sector. We hope that some of this conviction has been transferred to paper.

What we have not conveyed in this paper is a deep concern for the extent to which these supports are currently available to young people in high-risk environments. As stated earlier, the reach and commitment of the national youth-serving organizations to low-income and minority youth and their neighborhoods is very mixed. Yet these organizations have programming, training and fund-raising capabilities that far exceed those of the majority of the community-based programs working with youth. The selling job is not just to policymakers and the public. As a group, these organizations will have to be convinced of the importance and feasibility of increasing their commitments to disadvantaged youth. They will have to adapt their programs and practices as needed. Our concern, however, goes beyond this portion of the youth-serving sector.

As a sector, the non-school community programs may be the places of last resort for many young people living in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Their schools are often non-functional and non-responsive, the neighborhood economically at risk.

For young people living in poverty, organized activities and facilities may off-set disadvantage by encouraging the development of their skills and abilities and providing access to opportunities that might otherwise not be available (Steinberg, et al., 1988). Community facilities may provide safe havens in which children can find shelter from negative influences such as violence, drugs, gangs, or early sexual activity (Littell and Wynn, 1989, p.6).

Yet, preliminary evidence suggests that the programs in these neighborhoods, while they exist, are fewer, less well-funded and more narrow and prevention-oriented in focus than those in more affluent neighborhoods. The Littell and Wynn (1989) study of two Chicago neighborhoods (affluent "Greenwood" and low-income inner-city "Innerville") found sizeable disparities in the availability, diversity, and sponsorship of community activities and facilities for youth. They write:

...despite Innerville's larger population, the organizations there have a relatively weaker capacity to serve members of their community than do their counterparts in Greenwood; that is, they appear to serve smaller numbers of youth and to lack funds necessary to provide a variety of resources for youth (p.28)

Overall,...a larger number of organizations are providing more resources per child in Greenwood than in Innerville...The variety of course offerings available outside of regular school programs and through various sponsors in Greenwood --from dog obedience training to microwave cooking to entomology classes -- is impressive; the non-school course offerings in Innerville pale by comparison. The contrast in the variety of available resources in these two communities is particularly important, given the disparity in economic conditions between the two communities and the fact that wealthier families are also likely to provide their children with a wider variety of educational and recreational opportunities in their homes (p.61)

Most important, however, is their finding that the private-not-for-profit organizations, not the public organizations, sustain the level of community supports for youth in Innerville:

In the fairly wealthy community that we studied, public organizations provide a greater portion of the activities and facilities for youth compared to public agencies in a low-income community. The public schools in the suburban community offer almost seven times as many extracurricular activities for middle-school children per week as do the public schools in our inner-city area. When adjusted for differences in population size, the public park districts in Greenwood provide eight times the number of activities offered in Innerville during an average week (p.61).

If Innerville mirrors other low-income communities in the United States, then low-income youth, who are disproportionately minority, are losing ground. The grim condition of their schools, and the limited job markets that await them have been well documented. But there is every possibility that the non-profit voluntary organizations that, as Littell and Wynn note, are often called on to "accommodate and respond to changes in other institutions -- families, schools, and the

workplace..." (p.7) are also completely overburdened. Just as we are convinced that we must find politically saleable ways to argue for strengthening the non-school youth-serving organizations, so are we convinced that we must find politically expedient ways of directing efforts where they are needed most—communities where citizens are quietly trying to work miracles.

COMMUNITIES AND ADOLESCENTS:
AN EXPLORATION
OF RECIPROCAL SUPPORTS

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on Work, Family and Citizenship: Youth and America's Future

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APPENDIX:
Description of Selected Studies on the Impact of Community Supports on Adolescents

<u>Reference</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Repeated Measures?</u>	<u>Control or Comparison Group?</u>	<u>Analytic Methods</u>	<u>Significant Findings</u>
PARTICIPATION					
Conrad & Hedin 1982	Non-random sample of youth participants in 27 exemplary experiential education programs during the 1978-1979 school year (N=4,000).	Instruments administered at the beginning and end of each program (length of programs varied).	6 of the 30 programs had comparison groups, composed of students in non-experiential classrooms.	Descriptive statistics, t-tests, multiple regression analysis.	Students in experiential education programs showed improvements in self-esteem, moral reasoning, personal and social development; their attitudes toward adults and toward involvement in the community became more positive.
Hanks & Eckland 1978	Non-random sample taken in 1970 of respondents to a 1955 survey of high school sophomores (N=1,627).	No repeated measures. Data collected in a 1970 survey included retrospective reports of subjects' activities in 1955.	Within sample comparison of subjects who had participated in school extra-curricular activities.	Multiple regression and path analysis controlling for: SES, sex, 1955 measures of academic aptitude and sophomore class rank.	Youth participation in school extra-curricular activities was related to later educational attainment and participation in adult voluntary organizations (net of the effects of control variables); not related to adult occupation or income.
Hanks 1981	10,245 respondents to a 1975 follow-up NLS survey of youth who had been high school seniors in 1972. The NLS uses a probability sample of the U.S. population.	Panel data from NLS surveys taken in 1972 and 1975.	Within sample comparison of subjects who had participated in instrumental or expressive voluntary activities and those who had not.	Multiple regression and path analysis controlling for: SES, academic aptitude, class rank, self-esteem (at T1 and T2), sex and race.	Youth participation in voluntary associations in 1972 (particularly in instrumental rather than expressive groups) was related to discussion of political issues, participation in political campaigns, and (to a lesser extent) voting behavior in 1975 (net effects).

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Ladewig & Thomas n.d.	Stratified random sample of U.S. adults, screened to create 3 subsamples: former 4-H members (N=709), former members of other youth organizations (N=743), and non-participants (N=309).	No repeated measures. Data were collected in telephone interviews in 1985.	Former members of youth organizations other than 4-H and adults who had not participated in any youth organization.	Descriptive statistics, Chi-square, t-tests, ANOVA, correlation, regression and path analysis (used to describe differences within groups; no controls for differences between groups in age, SES, race, or place of residence).	Former and men youth or attained levels of than non-participa adults, p were mo be invol activities: political organiza were mo be empl reported incomes participa
Otto 1975	Non-random sample of 17 year-old men enrolled in Lenawee County, Michigan high schools in 1957 (N=340).	Panel data from a 1957 survey and a 1972 telephone follow-up. Independent variables measured in 1957, dependent variables in 1972.	Within sample comparison of subjects.	Multiple regression and path analysis controlling for: 1957 measures of SES, academic ability, and grade point average.	Adolesce participa extra-cu activities was prec their edu attainme (net of t of contr variable
Otto 1976	Same as above.	Same as above.	Same as above.	Same as above.	Adolesce participa extra-cu activities was rela levels of and occu attainme participa voluntar organiza involvem political (net effe

<u>Reference</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Repeated Measures?</u>	<u>Control or Comparison Group?</u>	<u>Analytic Methods</u>	<u>Significant Findings</u>
Otto & Alwin 1977	Same as above.	Same as above.	Same as above.	Same as above; also controlled for reported influence of significant others.	Adolescent males' participation in athletics in 1957 was predictive of 1972 levels of educational and occupational attainment and income.
Otto & Featherman 1975	Same as above, but N=442.	Same as above.	Same as above.	Multiple regression and path analysis controlling for: 1957 measures of SES, academic ability, and grade point average.	Participation in extra-curricular activities in 1957 was related to 1972 participation in voluntary organizations, involvement in the political process, and frequency of contacts with friends in adulthood; but not to reported feelings of self-estrangement and powerlessness.
Spady 1971	Census of 297 senior boys from 2 suburban, west coast high schools in 1963.	Data from 1963 survey of students and parents, academic records, and aptitude test scores; 1967 mailed follow-up survey.	Within sample comparison of subjects.	Descriptive and non-parametric statistics including Weighted Net Percentage Difference technique, controlling for: 1963 measures of perceived peer status, actual peer ratings, grades, motivation (i.e., interest in difficult subjects).	Students involved in extra-curricular activities had higher educational goals in 1963 and were more likely to have finished 1 year of college by 1967 than non-participants. Students whose primary extracurricular activities were in social service or student government had higher educational goals in 1963 and higher educational attainments in 1967 than those who were active in varsity sports, social activities, or performing arts.

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CONTRIBUTION					
ACTION 1986	Random sample of volunteers aged 12-23 in 18 of 20 second-year Young Volunteers in ACTION projects (N=302); subjects' supervisors (N=151); and project directors (N=18).	On-site interviews with volunteers, supervisors, and directors in June 1985, followed 4 months later by telephone interviews with project directors. Pre-program data from retrospective reports.	No control or comparison group.	Descriptive statistics, crosstabs, correlation analysis, t-tests.	Subjects that the continuation of service as an adult would encourage others to compare. Comparison of retrospective current suggests made gains in understanding community ability to help others, of career willingness and reduced supervision.
Calabrese & Schumer 1986	The first 25 9th grade students to volunteer for a 10-week school community service program. 12 of these students continued the project on their own for an additional 10 weeks, while the other 13 terminated involvement after the first 10-week session.	Data collected at 3 points in time: pre-program (T1), post-program (T2), 10-week follow-up (T3). Included were measures of: alienation, attendance, discipline, and grade point average.	Comparison group of another 25 students who volunteered for the same program.	One-way ANOVA of repeated measures, t-tests.	Students' service in 20 week reduced alienation, isolation, discipline, no change in absentee grades. Students' program discipline and alienation reduced these changes last (not at T3); reduced absentee grades.

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Cognetta & Sprinthall 1978	Non-random sample of 10th through 12th grade students in a 12-14 week elective class and practicum on cross-age teaching (N=17).	Pre- and post-tests of ego development (Loevinger) and moral development (Kohlberg).	Comparison group of 26 students in regular social studies classes.	t-tests for within-group differences between pre- and post-tests.	Subjects in the treatment group improved on tests of ego and moral development (no change in comparison group).
Hamilton & Fenzel 1987	Non-random sample of volunteers aged 11-17 in community improvement and child care projects in 10 New York counties (N=73).	Pre- and post-tests of social and personal responsibility.	No control or comparison group.	ANOVA, t-tests, multiple regression analysis controlling for differences in pre-test scores; and qualitative analysis of interview data.	No change in attitudes on personal responsibility; kids in community improvement projects developed more positive attitudes toward social responsibility for needy people than those in child care projects. 90% of subjects said they were likely to continue volunteer work. Volunteers seemed to gain knowledge of themselves and others; and developed vocational and interpersonal skills.
Newmann & Rutter 1983	Non-random sample of participants in well-established community service programs in 8 public high schools (N=158).	Measures of social development administered at the beginning and end of one semester.	Comparison group of about 20 11th and 12th graders in each school (N=156).	ANOVA, multiple regression analysis controlling for: pre-test scores, SES, GPA, and opportunities for development.	Program appeared to be related to modest increases in social competence and sense of non-school responsibility. No differences between program and comparison groups in sense of school responsibility, political efficacy, future affiliation or future political participation.

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Wolf et al. 1987	Stratified random sample of participants in the California Conservation Corps (CCC) during 1983-1984 (N=943).	Interviews conducted when participants joined the CCC and at 6 or 9 months after they left the CCC.	Matched comparison group of 1083 youth who sought employment services from a state agency and were eligible for the CCC but did not apply. Groups were matched on sex and race/ethnicity.	Multiple regression analysis, controlling for: SES, race, and gender.	Program earnings than during but not after CCC. appear positive physical and at behavior nontra for we aware: enviro proble blood, commu

PERSONAL SUPPORT

Bryant 1985	Non-random sample of 168 children aged 7 and 10 in non-metropolitan and rural northern California in 1977-79. Subjects had continuous contact with 2 parents and little geographic mobility; most (98%) were white, and none were living in poverty.	No repeated measures. Children were taken on a neighborhood walk and asked to describe their involvement with personal, home, and community resources. Several measures of social-emotional functioning were used.	Within sample comparison of subjects.	Chi-square, multivariate analysis of covariance, univariate ANOVA, correlation and hierarchical regression analysis controlling for: sex, age, sex of sibling, family size, and SES.	Child's support to social functioning based and ex network versus of sup: related social functioning year-on use of than d
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<u>Reference</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Repeated Measures?</u>	<u>Control or Comparison Group?</u>	<u>Analytic Methods</u>	<u>Significant Findings</u>
Burke and Weir 1978	Non-random sample of 93 male and 181 female students, aged 13 to 20, in 3 Toronto area high schools.	No repeated measures. Data on stress, social support, life satisfaction, and well-being.	Within sample comparison of male and female subjects.	Chi-square, t-tests.	Females reported greater life stress and poorer emotional and physical well-being although they reported discussing a greater number of problems with peers.
Cauce et al. 1982	Random sample of 9th and 11th graders in 3 inner-city public high schools in a northeastern city (N=250). 67% of the subjects were black, most were from low-income families.	No repeated measures. Data from school records and indices of self-concept and perceived social support.	Within sample comparison of subjects.	Factor analysis, multivariate and univariate ANOVA.	Perceived peer support was related to lower school performance (GPA) and greater absenteeism. Perceived helpfulness of support from distinct sources (family, friends, and formal supports) varied by sex, age, and ethnicity (e.g., females saw peer support as more helpful than did males, older teens rated formal supports more helpful than did younger teens, and black youth rated family members more helpful than did non-blacks).
Cauce 1986	Non-random sample of black, low SES, inner-city 7th graders in 1 northeastern middle school (N=98).	No repeated measures. Data from questionnaires on peer group values, social support, views of self and others, and socio-metrics.	Within sample comparison of subjects.	Network analysis, correlation, multivariate hierarchical regression analysis controlling for sex.	Perceived peer support and number of reciprocated best friends were correlated and both of these variables contributed independently to school competence, social competence, and perceived self-competence (i.e., self-esteem).

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Sandler 1980	Non-random sample of kindergarten through 3rd grade inner-city children who were experiencing adjustment problems (N=71).	No repeated measures. Data from indices of stress among children and parents' ratings of children's adjustment problems.	Within sample comparison of subjects.	Correlational analysis.	Presence of siblings, parents, household related levels of adjustment among
Werner & Smith 1982	Census of children born in Kauai in 1955 (N=698). Most subjects were from low-SES families.	Longitudinal study with data points in the perinatal period, at birth, at 1, 2, 10, and 18 years. Data from: interviews, home visits, medical and psychological exams, school and social service records.	Within sample comparison of subjects who developed serious behavior or learning problems at some time during their first 20 years (N=204) and those who did not have these problems.	Descriptive statistics, crosstabs, Chi-square, t-tests, correlation, and discriminant function analysis.	Comparison of who developed problem youth (more in of control positive concept nurturance responsive achieve attitude than or more li multi-g network friends adolescents)

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Heyns 1978	Stratified random sample of 6th and 7th graders in Atlanta public schools in 1972 (N=2,978).	Achievement test scores at 3 points in time over a 1-year period, plus parent interview data (e.g., on children's reading habits and library use).	Within sample comparison of subjects.	Multiple regression analysis, controlling for: prior achievement test scores, SES, household size, race, and sex.	The number of books read during summer library use, the effect of control reading achievement were no summer once the reading controlled highly correlated with summer
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